

**VISVA-BHARATI  
LIBRARY**



**PRESENTED BY**











*THE NINTH  
OF NOVEMBER*



# THE NINTH OF NOVEMBER

By  
BERNHARD KELLERMANN

Translated from the German by  
CAROLINE V. KERR

ROBERT M. McBRIDE & COMPANY  
NEW YORK . . . . . 1923



*THE NINTH OF NOVEMBER*

PART I





## BOOK I

### 1.

**O**RDERLIES hurrying up the steps stopped as if rooted to the spot; a rosy-cheeked young captain, glittering with orders, started to sneeze, but hastily concealed his handkerchief; only the wearer of a drill jacket succeeded in escaping into the porter's lodge in the nick of time. Above them on the stairs gleamed the red facings of a general's uniform.

General von Hecht-Babenberg, his broad face hewn out of granite, his gray eyes withdrawn into their deep sockets, and his massive figure enveloped in profound thought, came down the broad stone steps into the entrance hall. The eyes of the transfixed orderlies turned with a jerk to follow each of his steps, and the rosy-cheeked young captain grew rigid in his salute.

Of all these the General took not the slightest notice. He passed between them, cold, collected and composed. His patent leather boots shone and he left behind him a faint odor of perfume.

At this moment the porter rushed out of his lodge and handed the General a letter.

"Just delivered, Your Excellency!"

With manifest reluctance the General stepped under the arc light hanging from the ceiling. The envelope, poor in quality, of an extraordinary poisonous light-green shade, the handwriting—all this displeased him. Suspiciously he turned the letter between the tips of his fingers. He quite evidently regarded it as a breach of the respect due his high rank that any one should presume to send him a letter of such

questionable—nay, offensive—coloring. His brow twitched. No name of the sender, personal, hurry!

And then he resolutely put his hand into his coat and brought forth his gold-rimmed eyeglasses. A dull brick-red spread over his stony face, over his neck which bulged out of his embroidered collar, over his large cartilaginous ear—he refolded the letter and thrust it impatiently into the pocket of his overcoat.

“Who brought this—?”

“A man, an elderly man—just now—” stammered the porter and teetered uncomfortably on his thin legs.

The porter, himself an old man, a veteran of 1870, his breast covered with all sorts of medals, knew the man with whom he had to deal. From the way His Excellency had turned the letter over between the tips of his fingers, he knew that His Excellency was displeased. But this little old man had argued with him so long—his only son—an audience—ahem!—even a cigar—and after all it was only a letter correctly addressed, just like dozens of others that were handed into the lodge every day.

“An elderly, somewhat smallish man, Your Excellency. Ten minutes ago. He has often been here and inquired for Your Excellency.”

“—Often been here?”

“Yes, several times already—and, a-ha!—there he is now—at the door!” exclaimed the porter, visibly relieved.

Just then a small face, of a pallid steel-blue color like blue snow, approached the glass door, cautiously, pryingly. Really not a face at all, more of a mask—a mask as big as a man’s fist, with blinking eyes and furrows caused by grief.

The General turned his head—but immediately the little blue face jumped back from the pane of glass. A stiff hat, an ulster, disappeared into the deepening twilight.

“There—now he’s running away!” the porter angrily muttered to himself, throwing the weight of his lean body against

the heavy doors. "After getting me into all this trouble. That's the way they all are!"

Cold, collected, composed, the General descended the stone steps without bestowing a glance at the street. The motor of the gray limousine purred impatiently.

The door slammed, the porter made his customary obeisance, and the limousine sped away into the night.

The General buried his chin in his fur collar.

"That scoundrel!" he thought, his stone mask quivering with rage. "But it's just like him!"

His eyes in their deep sockets suddenly widened. Here in the dark automobile where obtrusive looks could not spy upon him he could safely open his eyes. They were large and light, like polished lenses.

The little old man stopped at the corner of the big red building and raised his stiff hat as the General's car dashed by. His face shone blue as snow, and even his bald head had a bluish shimmer.

Deep blue and as glistening as steel, the twilight of the wet winter day sank over Berlin. The glass of the limousine sparkled, something majestic glistened within—then the car was enveloped in a suffocating cloud of gas. The man in the ulster stepped down from the sidewalk and started to follow the General's car with his short, hurried steps, as if he hoped to overtake it.

The limousine flew through the darkening streets, covering the pedestrians with a wave of melted snow and slush. Dirty dry leaves that had been blown over from the Tiergarten danced about in the current of air between the two back tires, and a newspaper, lost by some passer-by in a frantic effort to save his life, rolled madly along behind the car. At the street corners the back tires cut long furrows in the sticky slush. The horn tooted, and the "Mars' whistle" trilled: "Clear the track!"

The fleeing pedestrians saw nothing but a fur-lined over-

coat, a cap, and, if they were lucky, a glimpse of gleaming red facings. A General! One of the elect who fought the battles and got his name mentioned in the military communiqués. The curses froze on their lips. It was an honor—in a way an honor—nearly to be run over by the automobile of a General!

At the corner of the Wilhelmstrasse a cripple in a field-gray uniform crept through the mud of the street and was nearly run over by the limousine. This cripple dragged himself along by the aid of two short crutches. His back was bent and his face, hanging between the crutches, nearly touched the ground. He propelled himself by placing one crutch in front of the other, walking on his knees and dragging the maimed stumps of his legs along behind him. He pushed himself along like a dog the sinews of whose back legs have been cut. As he crawled forward, his entire body was shaken by an incessant frightful tremor.

"Look out there!" screamed the chauffeur, turning out at the last second.

The cripple's head shot back between his shoulders, and the heavily studded tires splashed a wave of slush over him. He remained in the middle of the Wilhelmstrasse, hanging onto his two crutches, and when he had succeeded in overcoming the tremor sufficiently to raise his face, the gray limousine had turned into the Linden.

A deluge of bobbing umbrellas, gleaming pools, two steel-blue omnibus horses, a policeman, and again a deluge of bobbing umbrellas. A traffic block! The car trembled from the angry throbs of the engine.

The eyes of the General glided over the bobbing umbrellas, the hurrying shadowy forms with blue hands and blue faces—bored, indifferent, void of sympathy. Although separated from these creatures only by the glass panes of his car, they were miles away for the General, miles away—these people with umbrellas, overcoats, beards and spectacles. . . . In a way they seemed unreal!

They represented chaos, the masses—fermenting with strange headstrong thoughts and futile dangerous instincts. Their conduct—senseless, incomprehensible. Without ideals, lofty aims, only appetites, sensual enjoyment, money. Incomprehensible! Nothing more than the raw mass to be arbitrarily kneaded and molded by the elect; the big reservoir from which the world's chosen drew as they saw fit.

The General's world was populated with creatures clothed in uniform and laid in their graves with a salute. These creatures moved according to definite immutable laws. They approached in long columns like the surf of the ocean or stood drawn up, motionless in rank and file, by the thousands, as if made of stone. A mountain-range. They had no life of their own, no thoughts of their own, no names, no faces, no souls, merely set in motion by a handful of the elect, and by them imbued with life and spirit.

In short, they were soldiers, mere tools in the hands of the superior of the earth, by whom the wheel of world history was set in motion. Now and again vast armies, all keeping step, surged through his head. Army corps, like one battalion, wheeling in faultless precision to the right, to the left, to grow rigid when the General so willed. At times the General saw the entire face of the earth filled with them. Stupendous human waves rolled across Europe and emptied themselves into the plains of the Ural Mountains, into the endless steppes of Siberia. A rush of blood in the convolutions of the General's brain made them seem to rise and sink. . . .

Forward! The axles creaked and the limousine again flew on its way. Hailstones pattered against the glass.

That scoundrel! thought the General, and settled himself comfortably in the corner of the undulating car.

Quite by accident, and moreover by a strange, rather ridiculous accident, he had learned to-day that a long-cherished suspicion was well-founded. That man—well, then

that "scoundrel" as he called him in his thoughts—who belonged to the entourage of the highest personages, who had the ear of the highest personages, it was this scoundrel who had shunted him off onto a "dead switch." Nothing could be more simple! And thus everything was explained.

About six months ago, General von Hecht-Babenberg, at the age of fifty-eight, without any warning, without any reason, was suddenly relieved of his command at the front and detailed to bureau work in Berlin. Meanwhile out there, as the General was wont to say, the guns were shooting Europe into tatters and a new world was arising from the sea of blood.

Inexplicable, incomprehensible!

Younger men than he were making world history: this was another of the General's favorite expressions. Unknown men from unknown families were forging to the top. It was a time when men forged easily to the top. And how many incompetent fools he knew (the General was given to strong expressions!) who were incapable of leading a regiment through the Brandenburg Gate and yet to-day, by the aid of competent staffs, were leading army corps. He could even mention them by name if any one so desired! Only quite recently, one of his acquaintances—that is to say, one of his former acquaintances—had lost three hundred guns and thereupon was made governor of an occupied country. The only thing was to have good friends. That was the whole secret, nothing else. He had led a division against the Russians—how long ago was it?—three years ago—and thereby gained the personal commendation of the All-Highest. On the Western front, on the other hand, his views had not always coincided with those of the High Command. On the occasion of a sudden attack by the French, he had advocated holding the position, cost what it might, whereas "back there," where they knew everything so much better, the opinion was to withdraw. To be sure he had left something behind, but after all what did these relatively trivial

losses in men plus a couple of trench-mortars amount to?

It was nothing, when you came to think of it, compared with three hundred guns! Nothing . . .

Upon his honor and conscience he would do the very same thing to-day, precisely the same thing to-day, for he could never act contrary to his convictions. In his sector there was a hill, called the Hill of Quatre Vents, and it was quite natural that he couldn't decide to surrender without a struggle a position of such vital importance for his sector, indeed, for a larger sector of the front. Three times he gave the command to hold Quatre Vents, cost what it might. Not until the hill was flanked by the enemy did he give orders to withdraw. It must be admitted that the withdrawal was not wholly successful.

An everyday occurrence—without any special significance.

No one would . . .

It was very evident; some one must have had a hand in the matter—some one, in fact, who wished to injure him.

He who had the ear of the highest personages—in a word, that "scoundrel"!

The stone mask trembled convulsively. More than thirty years ago . . .

Suddenly the car stopped in front of a brilliantly lighted florist's shop. The General awakened. A salesman was just dragging a large basket filled with lilies-of-the-valley out to the car.

"Here, inside!" commanded the General, knocking on the glass. With the basket came the wet and the cold. Immediately the flowers began to exhale fragrance and freshness.

"Lessing Allee!"

The limousine rushed along towards West Berlin. The springs creaked. The chauffeur held out now the right hand, now the left in warning—the whistle trilled—rapidity was the General's solution. . . .

. . . More than thirty years ago the General had dealt



this influential dignitary a blow, thereby arousing his present animosity, not to say hostility.

It was at a ball at the home of Baron Kress. A young woman was involved, and at that time he, the General, was considered the best dancer in Berlin. Towards morning a carriage was waiting at the entrance to the Kress palace. A lady came running down the steps. Her fur coat had been thrown hurriedly about her shoulders. "For heaven's sake," she cried, "quick, he saw me!" The carriage was already rolling away. The coat slipped from the shoulders of the fair lady, and he, the General, said: "You will take cold, Madame!" And he wrapped her coat about her as if she had been a child. He could distinctly remember having done this. And he remembered that this same woman had called his rival revengeful. "Be on your guard, he is revengeful!" What intuition, these women! And she was then almost a child.

Thirty years ago . . .

If he had only had the faintest inkling then that his rival would one day work his way up to the highest position! Possibly he would have been somewhat more discreet, who knows? Not without reason had he always tried to impress upon his sons: Make friends. Make friends, even while they were in the cadet school. For friends are everything in later life—everything. Not ability—perfect rubbish—everything depends upon connections.

Suddenly as if it were yesterday the General sees the young woman before him in the car. For years her features have been obliterated from his memory. She is powdered and wears a beauty spot on her chin. Her eyes are warm and glow with a peculiar radiance.

This young woman with the beauty spot, whom he once abducted from a ball, became his wife.

Long, long ago . . .

The General opened his mouth and gasped for breath.

A manservant in a zebra-striped jacket rushed out of the brilliantly lighted entrance hall of the red brick ivy-covered villa, and opened the door of the car.

"Herr General!"

"Herr General?"

The General rose, with stiff limbs, his back somewhat bent, as he got out of the car.

"Is Frau von Doenhoff receiving?"

"Madame is receiving, although Madame has the grippe."

"Will it be a long affair, Petersen?" the chauffeur asked of the zebra blouse. "What's going on here, anyway?"

"Birthday, Madame's birthday."

And with the basket of lilies-of-the-valley on his arm, the zebra-striped jacket hurried back to the brilliantly lighted hall to help His Excellency off with his coat.

## 2.

Frau von Doenhoff, the owner of the red brick ivy-covered villa in the Lessing Allee on the edge of the Tiergarten, was a blonde, no longer in her first youth, who was called the beautiful Dora by her intimate friends.

She was of medium height, the beautiful Dora, well-rounded, with small dainty feet, small graceful hands, with pointed tapering fingers, large brilliant eyes, of a marvelously radiant, quite extraordinary blue—the famous writer who was one of the intimates of the house always compared their color to that of mountain gentians—a couple of ravishing dimples, full red lips—ah, and her teeth—as white as snow! She laughed at every opportunity. Her laugh rippled forth spontaneously in scales and trills and sounded like the tinkling of little silver bells. It was very contagious. And at all times, from the moment she awoke in the morning, she puffed away at a cigarette held between her tapering fingers. She also smoked in the street, when she was

taking Butzi, her Belgian griffon, out for a walk. That was the beautiful Dora.

A glamor hung about her. A brilliancy, a reflected splendor. The reflection of a friendship she had had with a Royal Personage before her marriage. The sight of her always recalled this reflected splendor. Had the Royal Personage really pressed these slender be-ringed fingers to his lips, admired these dimples, been cheered by her ringing laugh, caressed that soft, uncommonly heavy blonde hair? Had the eyes of His Royal Highness rested on these shoulders? There was never a moment when Dora was not surrounded by this nimbus. The sun had set—but the reflection still lingered in the air.

Now His Royal Highness had been married for a long time and had three children.

After that!—Dora married a friend of His Royal Highness, a Captain von Doenhoff, one of the foremost gentleman riders of Germany, a professional petticoat-chaser and gambler, who had run through two fortunes within a short time. One of these was Dora's. One day she was left without a penny: *vis-à-vis de rien*!

In a word, Doenhoff proved to be a blackguard of the first water. He was even untrue to Dora on their wedding day, incredible as it may sound, and it was not long before she gave him his *congé*; they had lived apart even before the war. At present she was securing a divorce—or was she already divorced? No one knew precisely, the war having relegated all interest in trivial private affairs into the background.

The gentleman rider and gambler was an artilleryman and at present was with his battery on the West front—somewhere. He was turning gray with his guns in the wooded gorges of the Argonne, his face had become as yellow as old parchment along the chalk cliffs of the Champagne. The world had forgotten his existence—his women friends—only the present is potent. Only once during the entire

period of the war had he suddenly appeared in Berlin, without calling upon Dora, and forthwith there was a scandal—a woman, an officer!—always the same old story. And now he was growing still grayer out there with the guns. His temples were already quite white. Occasionally Dora wrote to him, and occasionally a letter came from the front, which Petersen would show to Frida, the lady's maid, and whisper, "From him!"

And so that was Dora and her love affair—only hastily outlined of course—and to-day she had the grippe.

Dora lived in an old villa which had been altered and added to many times: it was a perfect labyrinth of rooms, corridors, niches, alcoves, large and small stairways. Only those who had been coming here for a long time could find their way about. Dora had transformed the entire house into a rug bazaar. There was not a square yard that was not covered with a rug. Indeed there was one thing in the Doenhoff house not to be found anywhere else in Berlin, namely, an apartment arranged in perfect imitation of a tent, a sort of Arabian tent constructed entirely of rugs. As a result of this profuse use of rugs the Doenhoff house always smelled musty and dusty. Moreover, Dora had the house crammed with furniture of every description and every period, with pillars from churches and violently colored or gilded statues of saints. All the tables, vitrines, and mantel ledges were so thickly strewn with candlesticks, carvings, weapons, miniatures and bonbonnières that it was impossible to put down a pair of gloves without endangering some one of these precious objects. To keep all these boxes and carvings, saints and weapons, properly dusted was an impossible task. And thus the dust accumulated in thicker and thicker layers. Adjoining the Arabian tent was the dining-room, a huge hall with a gallery reached by a steep rococo stairway painted red and yellow. It was difficult to heat this room, and a continual current of cold air came pouring into the Arabian tent. Another unique feature of Dora's house was the lamps. No

other house in Berlin could boast of such variety in the lighting arrangements. Blue, green, red and yellow swinging lamps, all of exquisite coloring; candelabra with dozens of lights, heavy brass candelabra with thick wax candles, half-burned. The Arabian tent, itself, was lighted by a swinging lamp from a Polish synagogue, which emitted an opalescent bluish light, resembling cigarette smoke.

In the corner of the Arabian tent stood a huge purplish-red lamp mounted on a gilded baroque pedestal, taken from some church or other. Dora usually sat near this red lamp and then she shone like glowing alabaster while the others looked like corpses. Dora knew what she was about.

Between these rugs and lamps, remarkable saints and a thousand and one knick-knacks Dora moved about with her blonde braids, her dimples and the nimbus by which she was surrounded. No one had ever seen Dora in a bad humor. She had the most equable temper. Every one had a sense of well-being in her presence.

Not to forget Dora's bathroom, one of the sights of the villa—a genuine hothouse.

No sooner had the General entered the red brick villa than his stone mask underwent a change.

The General was one of the intimates of the house. Twice every week, on Tuesday and Friday, it was his custom to take supper with Dora alone.

In the light of the swinging lamp in the garderobe, the stone mask began to crumble; it changed into skin, the skin of a man who spent all of his time indoors, and who—but this is only conjecture—was already suffering from incipient arteriosclerosis. The rigid impassiveness of the face unbent. Even a trace of color—just see!—began to appear on the broad cheeks, a reddish violet, caused by the fine veins. The serious thoughts in which the General had been wrapped were cast off, the somewhat massive, ponderous body seemed to grow younger and more elastic.

"The grippe does not seem to be so serious," thought the General, as Dora's silvery laughter floated out into the garderobe.

The finely polished lenses of the General's eyes even rested for a moment condescendingly upon the servant. This was extraordinary, for the General was accustomed never to see any one. Then with genuine human interest, his eyes began to study the overshoes standing in the garderobe.

"Are there—ladies here also, Petersen?"

"Frau Major Sterne-Doenhoff and daughters!"

There was nothing the General detested more than an assemblage of people, be it large or small; nothing he so much feared as surprises; it was quite possible that without any warning he would be obliged to meet quite miscellaneous people, as had often happened: for instance, at the home of a military attaché, where the editor-in-chief of a radical sheet turned up quite unexpectedly, to say nothing of that stag party at Baron von Kraemer's, where one of the guests was an oriental-looking surgeon, a celebrity, to be sure, and baptized—but nevertheless . . . He wished to know who was to be present. However, he made an exception in the case of Dora, with whom he supped twice a week. He was acquainted with Dora's circle, very nearly at least—and it was only occasionally that he met here some painter or writer, to whose acquaintance it must be confessed he attached but little importance. However, this could not be helped; Dora herself had an artistic temperament.

The General passed the brushes over his gray hair, smoothed his thin gray mustache, examined his hands. . . .

The General was a model of immaculateness. Everything about him shone and glistened, the patent leather boots, the red stripes of his trousers, the row of decorations, the long polished finger nails—only the skin of his face, as has already been said, betokened indoor air. Just as he now looked, so had he looked in Poland when fighting the Russians—in France, where he lived in a château, but after

all that was no great feat. He had immediately had a bathroom built in—the first one in the château, and the bathtub was brought by automobile from Frankfurt.

Without any exaggeration, the General still had a stately presence.

A number of officers' caps, three in all, were also hanging in the garderobe. He recognized the silk cap of his son Otto, which was of a quite peculiar shape. Apparently he was making a farewell call, as he was leaving again for the front to-morrow. Wrinkles appeared upon the General's broad brow, but disappeared almost immediately. He did not care to meet his son Otto or his daughter Ruth in society. He felt himself observed; in short, it disturbed him.

"The company is in the tent, Your Excellency!"

"Quite so," but the General stopped and raised his brows—"a brush, Petersen!" The General had discovered a tiny hair upon the sleeve of his coat.

"It is one of Butzi's, General—the entire house is filled with his hair—"

"How could it be Butzi? In that case it must have been there since last Tuesday—no, that is impossible, Petersen!"

"Perhaps it was in the overcoat! These hairs are everywhere—" Petersen opened the doors leading to an ante-room. Here a single tall wax candle was burning before a desolate-looking stone gray saint in a vermilion-covered garment who was ecstatically swinging a book. Then Petersen threw back the curtain of the tent.

The General's back, somewhat relaxed during the discussion with Petersen as to whether the hair came from Butzi or not, straightened itself.

"—should really be more careful. For instance, smoke less—"

"—it isn't the grippe at all—"

"—hundreds are dying every day—"

Dora laughed: "You are very encouraging, Otto!"

And Petersen threw back the second yellow silk portière.

Instantly the Belgian griffon dashed out with a yelp. (The dog and His Excellency were at daggers' points!)

The officers shot up out of their chairs.

Dora was wearing the small lusterless yellow pearls in her ears, not the pearl drops which belonged to an earlier period! The General took this in at a glance.

His countenance, so far as such a thing was possible, lightened as he entered. Even his eyes lost their severity, but nevertheless they remained cold.

Dora glowed in the light of the big purple lamp, her arms and hands gleamed like coral, and, sure enough, the small yellow pearls shimmered in her fine transparent ears. The three black-robed Sterne-Doenhoff ladies—spare, stiff and deadly serious—rose from their seats in the shadows of the tent. (Major Sterne-Doenhoff had fallen six months earlier.) A mirror gave back the reflection of pale faces, made livid by the light of the bluish lamp hanging from the ceiling. These faces confused the General, who expressed his good wishes in a stiffer and more formal manner than he wished to do.

Now for the first time he noticed that Captain Wunderlich, one of the three officers present and a friend of the Doenhoffs, was still standing. He was holding onto the back of his chair, as he had been shot in the thigh and walked on crutches.

And then the General's eye fell on the delicate ethereal-looking little woman with the long face, snuggling her chin and dainty nose in her muff, who was sitting near Dora on the divan—ah, what a surprise, what a delightful unexpected surprise!

"It is really no joke, my dear lady, this grippe."

"I heard from a physician at the hospital—one hundred and forty died yesterday—and as he told me, not grippe at all, but pneumonic plague—"

"People just say that, it's just idle talk—"



"No, this physician assured me that it was true. The lungs are completely covered with small white festered blisters."

"They are nothing but simple streptococci."

"Simple, you say—"

"And the plague! Plague, that's just an expression."

Cheeky, this boy is always cheeky, thought the General.

Otto, the General's son, spoke with a loud clear voice, which always sounded impertinent, even when he was saying the most harmless things. He bore a striking resemblance to his father. Tall, the tanned face broad and brutal, the eyes bright, insolent, restless. He had a scar on his brow quite close to the shining blond hair, the result of a shot in the head received at Ypres in May, 1915. He lay for six months in the field hospital, but in so little of a hurry was the international General Staff, that, when he was dismissed in the autumn, he found his regiment in precisely the same place where he had left it in the spring. Now he sat in his chair with a certain unceremoniousness, very displeasing to the General, easy and self-complacent with his breast covered with orders—in contrast to young Heinz Sterne-Doenhoff, who, like his sisters, was in mourning and sat there stiff and shy. This Heinz was still a mere boy of nineteen, slender and delicate. He wore a field-gray uniform and, for the first time to-day, the insignia of an air pilot. However, he had not as yet been at the front and lived in constant dread that the war would end before he had a chance. He had the rosy mouth of a child, about which was still playing the smile of childhood. His brilliant blue eyes were fixed unswervingly upon the General, upon his row of decorations, his embroidered collar and the big white enameled cross he was wearing. What kind of a decoration could that be? He hadn't opened his mouth since the General came, oppressed by the proximity of so superior a personage. He sat ready to spring at any moment an opportunity should offer itself of performing some service for the General.

Wunderlich, with his large gray eyes—as melancholy as those of a cat—sat near Dora. He was tall and thin and looked like an eighteen-year-old college boy grown gray overnight. He never laughed and if ever he smiled—which was rarely, extremely rarely—it was only the ghost of a smile, intolerable to behold. At the same time his immovable countenance carried a challenge to every one not to be the least concerned on his account.

His eyes had a far-away look. Even when he spoke he seemed to be addressing some one at a great distance. One finger on the left hand was missing, and he wore a wrist watch.

His crutches were leaning against his chair and on these he swung to and fro like a bell, touching the floor with only one foot. Captain Wunderlich had been put out of action during the opening weeks of the war by a severe wound in the chest. A year later both legs had been crushed in Russia. Thereupon he went over to the air corps. To-day he was one of the best known flyers. He had to be lifted into his machine.

Frau von Sterne-Doenhoff and her daughters emerged from the semi-twilight of the tent; stiff, still, tiresome, with low-crowned hats, close-fitting suits, long faces. It was only now and then that they took any part in the conversation. They wore very tight-fitting black kid gloves.

And the other lady, the ethereal one, snuggling her chin and nose in her muff, sitting near Dora on the divan with one pointed knee thrown over the other? This lady, whose visit had so delighted and surprised the General? Who was she?

She was a Countess Heller, just back from Switzerland. Countess Heller was a spiritualist, theosophist—everything in which the General took no interest. But in addition to all this she was the sister of that—well then, of that “scoundrel,” as the General called him in his thoughts. Of that influential personage whose name was always spoken in a whisper in

society. His Majesty had, with his own hand—you know. . . .

The General had no inkling that he would meet her here. Such is fate! Or perhaps Dora had a hand in the matter? Dora, with her artistic temperament, who in some mysterious way divined the thoughts of people and knew how to arrange matters so marvelously?

"I really did not expect to see you to-day, Countess!" said the General, turning to her with every indication of joyful surprise. "You were away for a long time. How do you like being in Germany again?"

Countess Heller laughed and pushed a bit of cake between Butzi's sharp snow-white little teeth. "I find it too perfectly awful!"

"Ah, ah!"

"A cemetery!"

The General smiled indulgently. Certain eccentricities must be overlooked in a lady of the high aristocracy, in fact the highest aristocracy, the sister of so superior a personage—and moreover a lady who had occult connections with the shade of Frederick the Great.

Just then Petersen came in bringing a telegram. Dora blushed as she opened it. It could be seen that it contained only a few words.

The General guessed; it came from the front!

The conversation lagged.

### 3.

And in fact the telegram—which Dora carelessly folded and laid in a little Japanese lacquer bowl—did come from the front. Captain Doenhoff had sent it off that morning and at this very moment was wondering whether it had reached its destination. He had come very near to forgetting Dora's birthday. It was only the night before when suddenly awakened by a rumbling detonation that it oc-

curred to him, whereupon he made a note of it. During the course of the war his memory had grown very bad.

He was sitting with his adjutant Kammerer in his dugout, two meters under the earth in the darkness of the Argonne Forest. A small petroleum lamp, an iron stove always red-hot, a telephone, two field beds and all sorts of rubbish were the only equipment. The walls sweated from the cold. Kammerer was busy trying to clean his short pipe. For this he was using a crow's feather which he had found outside. Doenhoff, the chief of the battery, was doing nothing at all but yawning, yawning. He was not sleepy, only tired, everlastingly tired.

A heavy gun rumbled in the distance. Its deep powerful snarl like that of a wild beast was clearly distinguishable above the noise, the crackling and thundering of the distant and nearer guns.

Captain Doenhoff raised his yellow face the better to listen.

"Do you hear it? There it goes again!"

The young officer did not look up, he was absorbed in his task.

"He's firing oftener now with the heavy gun," he answered lightly. "They have more ammunition."

The ground trembled and a loud crash was heard. Captain Doenhoff laughed gayly. "There, there," he said, "he's taking off our cupola!"

To this Kammerer made no answer. He was blowing with all his might into the stopped-up neck of the pipe. The brown tobacco juice poured out, but, the devil take it, something must be stuck up there.

"You should use a wire, Kammerer."

"No, it's got to go this way—"

Captain Doenhoff yawned again. His teeth were yellow and badly kept.

Here in this accursed forest, with all due respect, men grew more and more like pigs. His battery had been

stationed in this same position for over a year. Recently it looked as if it would be moved to the Champagne—but nothing came of it. The Champagne was no Paradise, to be sure, but at least there was light—here it was always dark and gloomy.

Day and night this somber forest resounded to an uncanny rumbling and rattling, laughing, sneezing and coughing. Day and night steel birds flew whimperingly and moaningly over the forest, and the rattling of the machine guns hammered an hundredfold stronger in the gorges of the forest—until suddenly all other noise was drowned out for seconds at a time by a single big noise. Yesterday the oak in front of the dugout was torn to pieces, to-day a tall pine crashed to the ground. The splinters gleam through the darkness. The rain swirls, streams of clay flow down the narrow log paths which the soldiers have cut through the thicket. At times one meets a creature having the semblance of a man, covered from head to foot with loam. At times little bands of ghosts, with bloody bandages on their heads and arms, drag themselves down the log path. . . . No, the devil take it, this forest is no place for a gentleman!

Captain Doenhoff thought of the sun—of a desert in the sun, radiating with light, trembling, vibrating with heat. It would be a positive pleasure to sweat under the sun's rays. And suddenly Dora came to his mind. The telegram must be there by this time. His thoughts moved slowly.

"Didn't you know General von Hecht-Babenberg, Kammerer?"

"Which Babenberg?"

"Well, that one, you know—the one who was sent back—"

"Never saw him. Why do you ask?"

"I was just thinking of him—just happened to—"

What is it he's after? thought Doenhoff and remembered what some one had told him. What were his intentions?

Dora? Grown children? You never can tell. Dora was insisting that he come to Berlin soon—a signature was lacking in the document—well, it should not be laid to his door.

Kammerer beamed. Suddenly the air came streaming through the stem of the pipe. "There you are, now the child has air—"

The telephone tinkled. The observer announced that the enemy was working boldly in a new trench.

Kammerer's whistle was already to be heard in the forest. The guns of the Doenhoff battery are distributed over a long stretch and can only be discerned when the black muzzles begin to move. Here in the forest it is already quite dark, but over there at the observation post the shadowy forms engaged in throwing up dirt along the edge of the forest near Bouville can be plainly distinguished through the field-glasses.

The guns begin thundering again, furiously, with short sharp barks, and the echo resounds far and wide through the forest. The petroleum lamp lurches, while Captain Doenhoff closes his weary eyes and yawns.

Now there is a rustling sound like rain in the forest. The withered leaves still hanging to the trees fall to the ground, detached by the strong current of air.

"And Ruth? Where is Ruth?" asked Countess Heller. "Why did she not come?"

"She is always busy with her kitchen!" Ruth, the General's daughter, was a worker in one of the kitchens for the middle classes, a volunteer of course, not a paid worker.

"Ruth was here this morning," interjected Dora.

Dora's tea-table was most tempting with its flowers, cakes and sweets.

"When is the wedding to take place?" Ruth was engaged to a Baron Dietz, one of the wealthiest landowners of Pomerania. At the moment he was attached to the German civil administration in Bucharest.

"I don't know," answered the General, shaking his head. "Very probably in the summer. It looks to me as if Ruth would prefer waiting until peace was declared. I make it a rule never to interfere in the affairs of my children—"

Butzi, resembling an aging, ill-tempered lion in miniature, sat on his mistress' lap attentively watching his enemy, the General, whose shining patent leather shoes looked menacing.

War, Food, Politics! No sooner did two or three gather together than the conversation turned hopelessly in the same channel. Despairing efforts, eyes gazed into the distance, a smile tried to work its way to the surface. To be sure there was a heaven and a hell in every human heart; angels and devils wandered to and fro on the earth, ingratiating either by love or power; the centuries were invisibly stirred by eternally unsolved problems; the sun, a ball of red-hot gas, accompanied by its tiny planets, still flew through space at the rate of twenty-thousand meter-seconds towards the constellation of Lyra. The simplest problem had not yet been solved, the past was enigmatic, the future impenetrable, the present unintelligible; man an atom, less than an atom, still hanging over the abyss of life's mysteries, filled with terror, filled with hope—everything still hidden and incomprehensible. Every night man still sank into a terrifying condition of unconsciousness. Love, the material, the inconceivable, was still revealed in the tiniest insect, in Dora's laugh, in the serious faces of the Sterne-Doenhoff ladies. It was still omnipresent to be sure! And yet in spite of that absolutely hopeless! It was like perdition itself! The transfiguring smile died away, the affrighted gaze came back from its wanderings—nothing remained: Politics, War, Food.

Political destiny—the sum total of human weaknesses and errors—had petrified all thought. The dust rising from the battle fields and ascending to the very limit of the atmosphere rested like a mountain upon men's brains from the

Atlantic to the Pacific; men's brains were no longer functioning. Butzi alone carried on his own intellectual life. Why, for instance, was it dangerous to come too close to the red-striped trousers? Why was there an ominous twitching about the toes of the boots if you tried to touch the shining surface with your tongue? Answer, just Heaven! Of what did he smell? Of—to put it concisely—of indifference and contempt! He had no love for dogs. Butzi growled, without intending to do so, without knowing why he did so, nor why his little steel-blue heart was suddenly filled with rage.

Butzi promptly received a box on the ear. But he did not take it amiss. For was it not applied by his mistress, whose smile he adored, whose fragrance he loved, his mistress who loved and befriended all dogs! The benefactress and saint—even if these clamorous monsters did perhaps consider her as wicked—as shameless—as . . .

No, Butzi did not understand the inarticulate sounds made by these clamoring monsters. He could not comprehend their ardor, their excitement. Offensive, the approaching big offensive—the decisive blow. Incomprehensible! The gentleman with the red stripes had no faith in the Americans, and the ladies smiled. What did you say? Bluff, to put it in one word! He confessed that he was apprehensive—apprehensive, but nothing more! Had they limited themselves to special formations—automobile and flying corps, artillery—he would have been in a perfect fever of anxiety. But an army? Impossible! Where would they get their officers? You don't imagine that all these warlike preparations were meant for us! No! The biggest and the cleverest piece of bluff in all history.

Here Otto attempted to put in a word, but the General silenced him with a glance.

And the question of transport, now I ask you? Opportune prey for our U-boats, to quote the Secretary.

The ladies fairly hung on the General's words. Suddenly they seemed to breathe more easily. Countess Heller



interrupted to ask whether the people—on the whole, I mean . . . ?

The gentleman with the red stripes puckered his brow reproachfully. Then his features relaxed into smug confidence.

“Just a little instance, if the ladies will permit me—to show how really splendid the people are. One of my servants, a peasant’s son with the family name of Jacob, accompanied me throughout the entire campaign. I asked him whether he would not like to be at the front when it breaks loose again? You should have seen his expression, Countess! His face fairly beamed. But, I say to him, listen, suppose I need you here?—Long, profound thought!—Then I would remain with the General!—In this little incident, Countess, you have two of the most conspicuous traits of the German character—one, the German’s inherent love of fighting, and the other his manly allegiance—”

The Countess smilingly blinks her eyes with the powdered lashes. The General is still speaking. Every word breathes confidence. This evening Countess Heller will report every detail of this conversation to a certain influential personage. This is in the mind of every one present. The high dignitary is excellently informed as to the sentiments of all personages playing a rôle in public life. His smile is—deadly. A commendatory word from his thin lips is of more value than a battle won. Well does the General know that only a healthy optimism is liked in that quarter.

Butzi curls up resignedly in his mistress’ warm lap.

Reserves, enormous reserves. Running back as far as Frankfurt, Mayence, even Münster is a concentration camp. All the troops that were in Russia—the new recruits—a million strong, terrible and as strong as at the beginning of the war. The army will roll forward like a tidal wave, destroying everything in its path . . .

Another voice, somewhat clearer and not so dry, takes

up the conversation. It is the man with the crutches. The eyes of Frau von Sterne-Doenhoff light up. Blinkingly the Countess drinks her tea.

And yes, the gas! The march of the army will be prepared by gas! The most terrible "yellow-cross" and "blue-cross." It corrodes the gas masks, even those of leather, and the slightest contact proves deadly.

Every face beams, the cheeks of the sisters Sterne-Doenhoff and the young Heinz are already as red as if they had fever. The General glances suspiciously at the yellow silk portières. Might there not be an eavesdropper stationed there, perhaps one of the servants? He found it extremely indiscreet of Captain Wunderlich to speak so openly of such matters—even though they were, so to speak, among themselves.

Butzi had finally fallen asleep.

"God grant that the end is near," said Countess Heller with a profound sigh. "I should so like to travel."

"But you can do that, anyway, my dear? You are constantly en route!"

"I should like to go to Paris!"

"To Paris!"

But in a second the General had regained his composure. He bent forward. "You will go to Paris, Countess," he assured her with the greatest solemnity. "I give you my word for it!"

"I'll go to— General?"

"Yes," continued the General with the same solemnity. "Paris and Calais will fall, Countess, all that is left of the British army will be driven into the sea—during the summer we shall dictate peace in Paris. That is my solemn conviction!"

"God bless you, General!" and the Countess drew her tiny hand from her muff and extended it with a smile.

Otto took advantage of this little scene—during which the gray head bent low over the little hand—to rise quickly

from his chair and Heinz followed suit. The two young officers took their leave. Butzi awoke, convinced himself, by glancing sidewise at the General, that he was remaining, and curled up again in Dora's lap, resigned to his fate.

Otto bent low over Dora's hand which glowed like coral, and his bright, bold eyes . . . but Dora smilingly parried his glance.

"Good-by, Otto. Come back safely!" she said, and her little dimples shimmered.

"I have had no opportunity, Countess, of inquiring about His Excellency's health—but I permit myself the hope that His Excellency—" Here the General's voice sank to a reverential whisper.

"His Excellency's life was in danger a short time ago. The royal train, you know—and an enemy aeroplane—a bomb—but, thank God, nothing happened. Unfortunately the bomb struck a hospital train—the poor things—" But the Countess had sensed everything. At the identical hour she was awakened out of a dream by a bright light. So close was the mysterious connection between her and her brother.

The General's face displayed extreme consternation.

"Is it possible—a bomb—and we are just hearing about it—? When?"

"About ten days ago."

"Ten days ago! And we—had you heard it, Dora?"

The General simply could not grasp it.

#### 4.

The two young officers hurried along the dark wet streets on their way to a rendezvous with Hedi and Clara Westphal, two sisters belonging to Dora's circle. As it happened neither knew of the other's appointment, but that's neither here nor there.

Otto turned up his coat collar and swore.

"Terrible! Damnable!"

"What did you say?"

"Simply disgusting!"

"What do you mean, Otto?"

"All this rot they talk at tea parties! I turn here to the left, Heinz. I'm going to the Kaiserhof." Otto made a fresh attempt to rid himself of Heinz because he wished to be alone. What did this boy know of . . . ?

But Heinz did not understand. "It's all the same to me where I take the subway. That is, unless I'm disturbing you?"

Heinz had difficulty in keeping up with Otto who was racing along. It was a relief to be breathing the fresh moist air blowing over from the Tiergarten. How suffocating the air was at Frau von Doenhoff's! Dora smoked English cigarettes—somewhat perfumed; she still had them; it was a mystery where they came from, but at any rate they were there. Heinz was also delighted to have escaped from Dora's salon. He had been oppressed by the proximity of the General. Moreover he had not opened his mouth and felt that he appeared foolish, childish and ridiculous. His fantasy had been confused by the stars on the General's breast and especially by the embroidered collar (was it a comet or some other peculiar object embroidered upon it?). Fortunately, it was indeed a fortunate thing the General had paid no attention to him whatever. He had given him a hurried handshake and measured him with that rapid glance which officers of high rank were wont to bestow upon their subordinates when they met in a drawing-room. Good fellowship, you understand, but at what a distance! By the way, the General's hand, it was like steel—and cold as ice. He would never forget this handshake. But again his old anxiety became uppermost.

"Does your father really believe that we shall be in Paris by summer?" he asked, turning hastily to Otto.

Otto came to himself with a jerk. He was so lost in his

own thoughts that for a moment he stood still. It had grown cold and he was breathing so fast that columns of vapor issued from his mouth. He looked into Heinz's eyes, grasped what he meant and suddenly laughed.

"Of course he believes it. He's believed it for more than three years. As early as August, 1914, he instructed me as to how I was to conduct myself in Paris. By the way, he's never in his life been in Paris!"

"Then he really believes it?" said Heinz thoughtfully.

"Yes, I tell you, and he would go on believing if the French were occupying Hanover. Even then he would still believe it. That's his way!"

"But do you believe it also?"

Otto gave a short laugh. "I?" he said, or rather growled. "I'm at least no fool!" No, Otto, along with many other officers at the front, no longer believed in the victory of Germany's arms.

No fool?

"But your father, Otto, the General—?"

Otto now laughed loud and merrily. "The generals have their own way of thinking, Heinz! You can't yet understand that, it's a chapter all by itself. Once at Langemarck I lost thirty per cent of my men, and my General said: 'Well, that went off very well.' Word for word! My governor, by the way—he would like to reëstablish the empire of Charlemagne."

"Then you don't believe in it?" Heinz breathed more freely. "It would be too fatal," adding, "now, just now, as I have been made an air pilot."

Almost four years of war and still the same old story, thought Otto. But he kept his mouth shut. Heinz tried to elucidate to him more clearly his state of mind.

"You can't understand me," he cried. "You lucky fellow, to be starting for the front again in the morning!"

Otto buttoned up his coat more closely. Suddenly he felt cold. The thought of the front took his breath away

for the moment. The whole pitilessness of the zone of death, in which there were only riddled trenches, burned villages, splintered forests, lay like a nightmare upon his breast. Why, the devil take it, must he be reminded every minute that he was starting for the front in the morning? Those who knew nothing about the front acted as if he were going to a wedding. Yes, really, they congratulated him! Those who knew at any rate—well, they said nothing—at most a knowing, somewhat malicious smile.

The cold in the half-darkened streets seemed to crawl up his body, to crawl into his uniform. He recalled with utter loathing the dugouts in which he had spent years of his life, the icy breath issuing from the trenches. And suddenly, quite unexpectedly, his breast was contracted with a peculiar sensation—fear. Yes, fear! Simultaneously he saw before his eyes a flare which frightened him; the quick bright flash of an exploding shell. He grew pale. The noise made by a street car turning the corner had made him think for a moment that he was listening to the screeching of a shell.

His face was still as white as snow and his heart thumped—just as it did out there when they came whizzing on.

"Listen, Heinz," he said, "to the noise the street car makes when it turns a corner. The shells make just such a screeching and whizzing sound. You'll get out there soon enough!"

Heinz involuntarily quickened his steps. "I'm beside myself for joy!" he exclaimed, raising his beaming child's eyes to Otto. "Just think, I was only fifteen when the war began—and I scarcely dared hope that I should be permitted to fight!"

"Yes, we were just as delighted when the first shells fell near us," replied Otto, endeavoring to give his voice a lighter and gayer note. His heart was still beating and thumping. But he wouldn't for the world have let Heinz

know what was taking place within him. This boy! Should he tell him that he was bathed in cold sweat—that he prayed?—incredible as it seemed. Prayed! He! Then he remembered Souchez—the dead in their hobnailed boots lying in heaps; they had had heavy losses, a repulsed attack, when along came a Bavarian priest. He climbed to the edge of the trench—under fire!—raised the cross and said a prayer for the dead. The French fired—but he, he stood with the cross held in his hand. Peace be with you! Terrible, magnificent moment! He had faith, faith! Bullets for him were wind. But he, Otto, prayed without faith, which is quite a different thing. Should he tell Heinz how they ran—like rats under fire—hither and thither—like rats—from one dugout to another—in fact, every evening? Ho-ho! I tell you they were firing at targets!

“Yes, how we laughed as the first shells fell. I remember it quite distinctly. It was during an advance. But suddenly a leg was left hanging on a fruit tree—”

“What? A leg?”

“Yes, a leg. With the boot on it. It hung from the branch by the knee joint.”

“Brr!”

“Yes, and at that moment we stopped laughing and hurrahing, for up to that time we had greeted every shell with a hurrah. All of this is naturally most interesting for you, as you don’t yet know the tricks—especially for you as a flyer.”

“Did you ever fly at the front? No? I imagine it must be something marvelous. I’ve seen thousands of photographs of aeroplanes and I believe that I would soon learn the game. If only I didn’t have to wait so long!”

“But don’t forget, as I’ve told you, that some sharp shooting goes on at the front.”

Young Sterne-Doenhoff broke into a joyful laugh. “But, of course, that’s just the interesting part of the whole thing,” he cried; “to fly under fire!”

Otto stopped suddenly, quite unexpectedly and reached out his hand to Heinz. "I must—you'll excuse me, Heinz—I must leave you!" He was still somewhat pale.

"Auf wiedersehen, Otto. At the front, I hope."

"I hope so!"

"He's also caught it!" thought Heinz. "How frightfully nervous he is! And yet his name has been suggested for the *Pour le Mérite*!"

Otto raced through the dark streets like a madman. Heinz looked after him astonished.

Merciful God, how is it possible! Wished me a safe return! He had gone hoping to have a few words with her. A smile, a powdered hand, that was all? And there sat the entire company and, as luck would have it, the governor into the bargain . . .

Not a star, not a light, not a cloud was to be seen. Nothing! Only a thick slimy layer of rust, from which fell occasional shining drops, lay on the hideous dark houses, now sweating from moisture. And then Otto disappeared into a florist's shop.

Tulips, all flame and glow, pale pink roses.

"Each one costs—"

"I'll take them all!"

"All?" They cost a fortune.

"A last greeting!" wrote Otto. He was embarrassed by the curious gaze of the little red-haired shopgirl, who was observing him through the screen of the flowers. He grew alternately pale and red, as he wrote the few banal words and the address. The note must look quite harmless; any person spying around, that Petersen, that Frida, must be able to read it without suspecting anything. Had it not been for this he knew quite well what he should have written.

He could have written: "I shall see you standing before me . . ." And again he grew pale.



Love is a poison, thought the little red-haired imp, and laughed derisively behind Otto's back.

Otto walked along, somewhat calmer. Suddenly, he didn't know how it happened, he seemed to have plenty of time. His train left at seven in the morning. Well, that was still a good twelve hours off. He had the evening still before him—and the whole night.

He had a disagreeable appointment with a lady in the Kaiserhof. Well, we must see to it that the matter is disposed of! In the meantime there is no hurry—let her wait awhile. He had certainly left nothing to be desired in the way of explicitness—or had he? Finale, the end, be a brave girl, etc., etc. Just as one always writes under such circumstances. No, there was no relenting after that letter. And yet she had talked him over. She understood perfectly, she fully agreed with him, it was the end, of course, but before he left she would like to see him, if only for a few moments. She had written that she would be at the Kaiserhof from five to nine. He would undoubtedly find a moment for her! It was quite out of the question to allow a young woman to wait four hours in vain; he realized that perfectly.

But at least she should dangle, he thought, and leisurely lighted a cigarette. Indeed, he took the trouble to go a roundabout way.

"That Hedi!" He contemptuously exhaled the air through his nostrils.

At the bottom of his heart Otto had a contempt for all women, just as the General had. He bought an evening paper and glanced through it by the light of a street lamp.

## 5.

Heinz ran to the nearest subway station as fast as his feet would carry him. He had sent Clara word that he might be rather late, but despite that . . .

The shops were just closing.

Berlin was like a dirty sponge that some one was squeezing. Streams of dirt poured from the black heavens, from the roofs and the thousand-windowed walls of the houses. The slush stood ankle-deep in the streets and oozed in through the worn soles of people's shoes. Clad in thin shabby clothing and blue from the cold and from hunger, the people streamed out of the frosty houses and plunged into the windy tunnels leading to the subway stations. At every one this crowd of congested humanity was pressed into a clot of rage and bitterness. The overcrowded trains, dripping from steam and dirt, swept straight into this human snarl, which flung itself madly against the doors in order not to be left behind on the dark, wet platform.

The women conductors, whose husbands were either rotting in the mass graves at the front or bleeding to death at that very minute and whose children were crying for bread in a cold room—these women were tortured to the core by the onrushing trains and the struggling mass of humanity. Their voices were as shrill and piercing as if some one had thrust a dagger into their hearts. (And indeed they were being stabbed, there was not a minute that some hand was not unmercifully thrusting a dagger into their hearts!)

The people flew through the dark tunnels with mute, mutual, furious hatred. No one spoke. Every one lived in fear of spies and secret agents. They no longer laughed or even smiled. They sensed fate near them, in front of them, over their heads, where the vapor from this steaming mass of humanity ascended and clung to the roof of the car. This fate, the reflection of which shone in every eye, accompanied them through the dark tunnels, over the creaking bridges and thickly crowded platforms. When the trains disappeared into the tunnels it seemed to many as if they were traveling to hell, and the cold sweat pearly on their brows.

Darkness, cold and hunger menaced from the street

canyons. Berlin was in the grip of these three specters—Berlin that for three long winters had bravely defended herself, only to capitulate in the fourth. Daily these specters extended their sway over the city. They conquered one block of houses after another, one flight of streets after the other, one section of the city after the other, and pushed slowly forward into the very heart of the capital. To these was now added a fourth specter in the shape of grippe. This specter was a traveler in every one of the overfilled subway trains. The passengers coughed death into each other's faces. Many of them were to-day taking their last journey. This fourth specter seemed to have a preference for the youngest specimens, loved tender flesh. Mere contact meant death. For the old it only meant a step nearer the grave into which they would inevitably plunge one day, weakened by hunger and from desperation.

Heinz was unable to squeeze into the first overcrowded train. Two brutal fists threw him back. It was only due to his friendly child's face and the smile upon his red lips that he succeeded in making the next train.

He instantly thought of the green tam. In a few minutes he would see it!

A green woolen tam, smartly pushed to the back of the head, grass-green with a grass-green tassel. A trifling thing, to be sure, but in the heart of a man it can amount to as much as the image of Christ in the churches! At moments when the features of his sweetheart grew dim in his memory—which rarely happened—the green woolen tam remained; no power in the world was able to take it from him. And gradually, as if by magic, her hair, her cheeks, her eyes, fitted themselves to the cap.

This green woolen tam gleamed across the Wittenberg Platz as he left the station—throwing its rays far and wide like a searchlight. And yet it was only a spot of green as large as your hand, rather indistinct even in the light of the street lamp. Heinz' look seemed to bore through the crowds

as if they were transparent. He was able to see his lady-love from the tips of her shoes up to the tassel of the green cap; her whole figure was visible, even though she stood in the midst of the crowd waiting on the corner for the street car. This was something quite marvelous. He recognized the lines of her close-fitting jacket and could even see that she had a small parcel hanging from her finger.

Suddenly a voice fell upon Clara's ear! And yet Heinz had not made a sound. At the same moment she looked at him; their eyes met through the crowd. She smiled, her smile came nearer, it grew more radiant and brilliant, it obliterated the shadowy forms of the crowd, the darkness and the dirty streets, until finally it shone quite near him. And now it had again withdrawn into its source. But it continued to shine from her lips, her white teeth, her cheeks, and even from her hair upon which a few raindrops glistened like dew.

Both blushed and began talking at the same time. What they said made no difference. They merely rejoiced in the sound of their commingling voices.

"You—you have . . ."

"—a thousand pardons—my cousin wished me to meet Captain Wunderlich who has charge of a fighting unit."

The little green tam glided through the street, the silken tassel swinging to and fro.

How marvelously fresh is her neck ruche, thought Heinz, and how snugly her jacket fits about the hips. She, on the other hand, was admiring the set of his overcoat, which nearly touched the ground and was far too wide, and his silk cap, ballooning most audaciously.

"But you are wearing the badge!" cried the young woman with pleased surprise. She had discovered the insignia of the flying corps, when he threw his coat back for a moment.

"Yes, I received it yesterday."

"I congratulate you!" That was just the opportunity for

taking her hand. Heinz touched the tips of her dainty fingers; how dainty and incomprehensibly slender!

"Yesterday I flew over Berlin," he related eagerly. "I flew over Wittenberg Platz and up the Kurfuerstendamm. At the Memorial Church I throttled the motor and went down to five hundred meters. I watched the crowds coming and going and thought, Maybe Clara Westphal is also walking along down there."

No, Clara Westphal was at home.

Clara shot an admiring glance at her young hero. She noticed the other women staring at the slender officer; many of them even turned for a second look, he was so handsome and vigorous. He walked along, insouciant and radiant, his cap pushed somewhat audaciously to one ear, and had a peculiar way of saluting as if superiors did not exist for him. His salute was at times even somewhat condescending and patronizing. Now, walking by Clara's side, he had fully recovered from his childish fear, above all of people who wore epaulets with stars.

"And your detail?"

"Unluckily there is nothing doing yet. But Captain Wunderlich has promised that he would ask to have me attached to his fighting unit just as soon as possible."

There was nothing that Clara dreaded more than that terrible moment when the orders should come. Already her heart thumped at the thought.

"Where shall we go?"

"It's all the same!"

Indeed, it was. If they were only permitted to walk near each other in the ban of this unfathomable, this indescribably sweet secret—looks, gestures, laughter and words amounted to nothing.

They were absolutely unconscious of the people springing from the cars and hurrying into the restaurants or the impertinent ones who stared and made some remark about them.

They turned into a dark street and instantly Clara's eyes shone like fire, her blonde hair seemed aflame under her green cap, and her somewhat full cheeks began to shimmer mysteriously. But her little mouth gleamed moist and deep red.

Marvelous! Here in the darkness Heinz saw that she actually breathed; he had not realized it before. Her breast rose and fell under the close-fitting jacket. For the first time he heard her breathing, something he had never heard before.

A smile parted Clara's lips and at the same moment she cried jubilantly: "It's snowing, Heinz! It's snowing!" And away flew the green cap with the bobbing green tassel.

"Come, come!" She stretched out her hand to him.

And hand in hand the two ran through the whirling snow.

In the meantime Hedi Westphal was waiting in the lounge of the "Kaiserhof" and Otto was leisurely reading the evening paper by the light of the street lamp.

## 6.

Hedi had long ago finished her tea. She would have liked to order a second portion but she had to economize. This everlasting poverty!

Her father was a Privy Councillor in the Foreign Office. Every day in galoshes and a high hat he slunk past the two statues of the Sphinx in the vestibule, upon whose faces there dwelt a peculiar smile.

Then he cracked his fingers in his office, tugged at his thin Chinese mustache and buried himself in the newspapers. Not a very exhausting activity, to be sure, but then he was badly paid, and the Westphals themselves had no means.

Despite Hedi's ridiculously small allowance she looked a thorough lady, from the neat pumps up to the little aigrette on her gray silk hat. She wore a white veil embroidered in

silver gray. She was even more of a blond than Clara, almost corn-colored.

Every now and then she pushed the veil with the silver-gray embroideries up over her little nose, and, with her hand gracefully curved, sipped at her empty teacup.

Her whole bearing was dignified, somewhat indolent. The rest of the world did not exist for her. She sat there floating, as it were, in perfect equilibrium.

The music wailed *Butterfly*.

An elderly officer with a bald head that shone terribly stared at her in the most audacious manner. With a bored expression Hedi turned her eyes in another direction. But now came along a younger man and let himself down into one of the low fauteuils. He wore a wide overcoat of a conspicuously light color, immaculate brown shoes, quite new moreover—a curiosity at this time. With a cigarette in the corner of his mouth he sat there beating time to the music with a slender cane. Now and then he glanced at Hedi, but in a wholly casual manner so that he was never caught in the act. In the very nick of time his glance flitted from her up to the ceiling. Could she possibly have seen him somewhere? In a way his face seemed familiar. A waiter came bringing a small glass into which he poured a red liquor. The young man took a roll of paper money from his coat pocket and handed the waiter a bill, looking away as he did so. The waiter made a deep bow. Hedi looked at her wrist watch and her face expressed astonishment. It was half-past six. The orchestra was playing a tango. The man in the wide coat finished his red liquor, rose and left. But in a few moments he was back again, carrying a bunch of white roses which he laid on the table before him. Aha! he was also waiting! Again Hedi's equilibrium was completely restored.

There were a few other women sitting there—with diamonds, pearls, furs,—puppets in short—but for Hedi they did not exist.

Soon the lounge began to grow empty. The waiters cleared away the tea-tables. Lights were turned on in the restaurant, and behind the glass doors the waiters could be seen moving from one white-covered, flower-adorned table to another.

The man in the wide coat was still sitting in his low chair. Smooth-shaven, somewhat blue about the chin, with coal-black hair parted in the middle, he looked—so it seemed to Hedi—like a Spaniard. He was leaning back comfortably in his chair now, staring at the ceiling, while his foot kept time to the music. Occasionally, when he bent forward to flip away his cigarette ash, he took a covert look at Hedi. The white roses lay neglected on the table.

Hedi pouted her upper lip against her veil—she was growing impatient. Just then she saw Otto enter the door and walk quickly through the lounge. The blood rushed to her head and her heart beat in her throat. The cold air had brought a glow to his tanned face—the shining bronze face she had loved so dearly—and the light gray eyes of the Hecht-Babenbergs gleamed with a wild and reckless light.

What dreams died at this moment, what dreams were buried out of sight! While the tango cooed and gurgled out its little sensual plaints.

Her dreams collapsed with a detonation like gigantic palaces whose foundations had given way, were shattered like palaces built of glass—nothing but ruins!

Babenberg and Rothwasser, the family estates, with the century-old trees, the fragrance of summer on the endless cornfields, the brickyard, the bellowing herds of cattle down by the willows, the earth had swallowed them up! The visit from her little father, who had become a veritable mummy in the dry air of his office—vanished! The celebrities, generals and ministers who were to attend her balls—crumbled to dust. Her audience with the Kaiser, the curtsy she would make to His Majesty on some occasion or other—



nothing but a hazy mist! And all the fantastic visions seen in moments when the gaze was enraptured—all naught!

Meanwhile the tango beat against the soles of her little feet resting upon the parquet floor.

He had quite made up his mind—that was plainly to be seen from his expression.

Nothing remained but the modest apartment in the Schaperstrasse where papa came back from the office loaded with thick portfolios and didn't wish to be disturbed. Where every one thought in pennies and Clara prattled like a little fool.

Hedi was surrounded by chaos. There she sat—a beggar—in the cloud of dust created by her collapsed palaces, on the débris of her riches! But she sat like a lady with the most perfect composure and greeted Otto with a smile.

The gentleman in the light coat called to Otto: "Am I to expect you this evening, Otto?"

"It may be quite late before I can come."

"You know that my place is open the entire night."

Otto pulled off his gloves.

"It's snowing again, isn't it?"

"Yes, it's snowing; I am somewhat late, pardon me . . ."

Hedi laughed. "I only came ten minutes ago myself."

The waiter was already there with the tea.

"I told the waiter to serve tea as soon as you came," said Hedi. "You are probably in a great hurry." Otto had flushed and wrinkled his brow. Something was displeasing him.

The musicians packed up their instruments and closed the piano.

"It was dear of you to come," continued Hedi; "we shall not see each other again for a long time, perhaps never. And I wished—" She spoke lightly—a thorough woman of the world.

Otto's shining gray eyes were fastened upon her questioningly.

"I shall probably leave Berlin."

"You're going away?"

"Yes. To Sweden. It's not quite settled yet. But papa has been approached." (What a lie, what an infamous lie, but it suddenly popped into her head!)

"Really?" Otto's curiosity was aroused, but he dared not question Hedi.

"I shall be attached to the mission. Possibly I shall have to go to Russia. On a special mission."

"Ah!"

The gentleman in the wide overcoat stood up and bowed to Otto. He also included Hedi in his bow, and as she bestowed a brief glance upon him she smiled imperceptibly. But she could have sworn that never, never in the world would she have smiled had not her heart at this moment been so filled with bitterness. The Spaniard—who by the way was not handsome, on the contrary, rather ugly—was a Herr Stroebel or a Herr von Stroebel, a young man who had grown rich during the war. She remembered his name. She had heard from Otto that his house was the scene of notorious gaming parties lasting the whole night.

The white roses lay neglected on the table.

"I'm glad, Hedi, in a way—" began Otto. "I mean—you understand my motives? For me it's quite—"

"I beg of you, Otto," Hedi interrupted him. "I'm no little shopgirl," she said lightly; "we'll remain good pals. Now not another word. Have you a cigarette?"

The waiter rushed forward with a match. He upset her. Just to be saying something, Hedi remarked that the last time he started for the front, Berlin was in the grip of the same terrible heat. There was not the slightest design in this. Upon her honor. It was all the fault of the stupid waiter. But the blood rose to her cheeks and Otto also showed signs of confusion.

The last time—that was when Hedi gave her famous farewell supper. Otto was her guest!

The taxi went on and on—at that time Berlin was not as dead as now—until it stopped at an out-of-the-way hotel near the Silesian Railway Station—and Otto must fall in with her wishes. Hedi had planned everything. With a perfect torrent of words she had explained to the hotel proprietor that her husband was passing through Berlin, that they came from the provinces, that it was a war marriage, that he had only the one night to stay in Berlin, and that she would meet him at the station and bring him to the hotel. With another torrent of words, trembling with anxiety and excitement she had selected the rooms and chosen the menu. Nothing was too good and the waiter received a twenty mark tip in advance so that he should know with whom he had to deal.

All her savings for the entire year were lavished upon this fête. There were candles instead of electric light, although it was a difficult matter to unearth them; there was red wine, although all the red wine had been confiscated for the military hospitals; there was champagne, although it cost a terrifying sum. The little table which she herself set was gay with flowers. He should see how ridiculous it was even to think of passing this last evening in some tiresome wine restaurant. You must just know how to go at things. Everything was possible in Berlin if you only had the necessary enterprise.

And Otto was astonished! At the candles, the wine, the “whole blooming show” as he called it.

It was hot and the electric trams roared by under their windows. It was July. A battalion marched by, singing, on the way to the station. The music blared and the crowds cheered enthusiastically. Berlin, midsummer Berlin, roared down there—far down below.

The candles, the wine. He was her guest!

She did not refuse herself to him, why should she? She took off her gown and let down her hair. She slipped into the thin silk kimono which she had made specially for this

evening. He should see that she loved him. She wore her little raspberry-colored boudoir slippers. Berlin—the Berlin of midsummer and of her life—roared down there—far below them—somewhere.

Then came the night.

He should see that she loved him and that she had courage. Yes, it required lots of courage, for papa would throw her out into the street if anything happened.

She was completely beside herself with passion. Yes, and she could have sworn that she regretted nothing—that she would never regret it—despite the terrible anxiety to which she had been subjected.

The hoofs of a hundred horses resounded in the street—she could hear them even now—now at this very second . . .

The cigarette was lighted. "Thank you," she said, and the waiter left.

"Where's your regiment now, Otto?" she asked while the red slowly ebbed from her cheeks.

"I don't know exactly. But I imagine at the same place."

A few trivialities—and Hedi looked at her wrist watch and sprang suddenly to her feet. Heavens! She handed the waiter a bill, ten marks, that made a tip of three marks, but she could not wait for him to bring the change.

"And now I wish you a safe journey, Otto. No, keep your seat. I wish to go alone. I'm in a great hurry. Auf wiedersehen!"

Her departure came so unexpectedly that Otto was completely dumbfounded. Hedi left without a glance at the white roses that lay neglected on the adjoining table. She floated through the room, absolutely mistress of the situation.

A nod, a smile when she reached the door.

Well, that went off very well, thought Otto, who beckoned to the waiter with an impatient gesture, for he suddenly discovered that he also was in a great hurry. Then

it occurred to him that he had made use of the same expression that his General had—that time, when he had reported that he lost thirty per cent of his men. He had just told the story to Heinz. Well, at all events, she had conducted herself like a lady. There was nothing he dreaded more than a scene of any kind.

But nevertheless, he had a disagreeable sensation. What was it anyway?

At the moment he hated her bitterly.

## 7.

"The cad! The cad!" thought Hedi. What an unspeakable cad he was!

With rapid steps she hurried through the whirling snow, her umbrella hugged close to the hat with the little aigrette.

His motives—his motives, she knew perfectly well what they were! His family, his career—what shallow pretexts! If he had only had the courage to say that he no longer loved her! But these men are always cowards, even though they do go into the thick of the fight. Money and decorations, that was all the officers thought about.

The headlights of an automobile lit up the dark street and the snowflakes glistened in the circle of light. Suddenly Hedi came to a standstill. A wide, light overcoat floated in the glistening circle of light. He must have followed her, doubled on his tracks, in order to appear in front of her, or was it merely a chance meeting?

Her feet were paralyzed, the overcoat came nearer, and she noticed that he had turned and was coming in her direction. She turned quickly and tore down the steps to the subway. Heavens, she had made a mistake. Instead of taking the train for Leipziger Platz she had boarded the one for Friedrichstrasse.

The yellow coat appeared on the steps of the station. It

was visible only for a moment then vanished and did not come nearer.

Hedi breathed more freely.

No, she didn't need Otto. She needed only to stretch out her hand and for every finger she could have . . .

The train stopped at the station . . .

Otto left the hotel immediately after Hedi. He looked about for her, but she had already vanished. However, his attention was caught by a woman just getting out of a cab; fragrant and glistening, she passed into the hotel. Otto hurried home. He hastily donned mufti, accomplishing the change in an incredibly short time. He buttoned his coat as he ran down the stairs. He had not the slightest desire to spend the evening at home and listen to all sorts of talk about colonization, trade and strategic guarantees.

At the gate of the little garden in front of the house, he collided with a man wearing an ulster. But the little man in the ulster didn't seem in the least annoyed. On the contrary he took off his hat and murmured apologies.

"Herr Lieutenant!" He evidently knew him. Probably the caretaker of one of the neighboring villas.

Hurry! The General's limousine was just driving up.

Otto rushed away towards the Friedrichstrasse section of the city; his tempo seemed to indicate that he hadn't a second to lose.

## 8.

A chill greeted the General as he entered his house. He occupied the lower floor of a one-storied gray house in the Tiergartenstrasse, close to the Kemper Platz and not far from Dora's red brick villa. Chill and silence—the villa seemed to be filled with the presence of winter and death.

The General's wife had died in Davos a few years be-

fore the war, after . . . During later years, his marriage had not been a happy one. In fact, his wife had never lived in the apartment in the Tiergartenstrasse at all. At that time—how long ago was it?—she was living in the Margaretenstrasse.

His son Kurt—the eldest of the children—was also gone. Fallen at the Somme.

A peculiar chilly draught seemed to blow through the house, and instantly the General's face grew stony. The war had destroyed all semblance of family life. Ruth and Otto went their own ways. Just now Ruth was a volunteer worker in a kitchen, before that she had been a nurse in a military hospital, and when Otto came home on leave, he was rarely to be seen—a gay young dog. . . . There can be no compromise in this respect, either a family lives happily united or it goes to pieces.

The servants in the entrance hall rattled to their feet. The orderly also rattled as he brought the portfolio with the documents which had to be finished that evening. There were only soldiers in the General's establishment—and his housekeeper, Therese, who was quartered somewhere in the back of the house and was rarely to be seen. Soldiers had gone in and out as long as he could remember. His father died as a major. The house clanked and rattled from arms, and the odor of the barracks was brought into the house by the soldiers.

The General let his fur-lined coat slip from his shoulders; some one would be standing there to pick it up.

Yes, chilly—although the apartment was well heated. He saw his stony face reflected in a dark mirror. All the lamps seemed to be badly or awkwardly placed. Instead of radiating light and cheer—how warm and cosy it was at Dora's!—they only diffused a hostile glare and odious, coal-black shadows. Sombre wood panelings, heavy baroque furniture, gold decorations; the hardwood floors creaked when trod upon; it was an old house.

The chilly feeling left him when he reached his study. Only here did he feel himself at home. He breathed more freely, his bearing became somewhat more relaxed.

With quick steps he approached a bird cage, the home of a little yellow canary bird.

"Well, Niki-Niki!" He stuck his finger through the wires; he spoke to the bird in a changed, comical tone of voice, precisely the same that he had used in speaking to his children when they were still quite small—small, lovable and full of childish confidence.

"But the little piece of apple . . . it has fallen down, but now we will look for it . . . and the water in the little basin all splashed out again—you rascal—"

The bird chirped and jumped excitedly from perch to perch. "Yes, you see . . . your little master. . . ."

There was a knock on the door. A loud voice cried: "Dinner is served, Herr General!" This was Jacob, the Uhlan, maid and valet in one. There was also another servant, Wangel, but his duties were outside of the house. The clocks chimed. It was eight o'clock.

Precisely eight o'clock—punctual, always punctual! The General was the incarnation of punctuality! Sometimes, when extremely fatigued, he lay down to rest—ten minutes, twenty minutes—but he must be called on the second. The servants could loaf the entire day or gossip with the cook, but their watches must always be right to the second. The General arose punctually at half-past seven in the morning, at a quarter-past eight he breakfasted, at one o'clock he drove away to dine (at noon he always ate down town), on the stroke of eight he ate his supper. When he was at the front his day was divided in the same manner, even though the world should come to an end. And at times it seemed as if it had come to an end, but that did not have the slightest effect upon the General's mode of life.

Time, time . . . every minute was precious . . . his duties . . .



Well, then . . . on the stroke of eight the General entered the dining-room.

Ruth said, "Good evening!" and greeted her father with her light brown eyes which had a warm golden shimmer in their depths. She was no Hecht-Babenberg, that is to say, she had physically not followed the traditions of the Hecht-Babenberg race, which had large strong bones, broad skulls and somewhat Slavic cheek bones. She was a Sommerstorff, and took after her mother, who came from a South German Frankish family. She was not tall; she had rather narrow shoulders, she was dainty, and her hair was dark blonde, almost brown, and so soft that it was difficult to arrange. Her coiffure often presented an untidy appearance. At times the General punished her for this negligence by a sharp look. Ruth then smoothed her hair and was embarrassed.

The General poured himself a glass of Fachinger. The evening paper lay at his plate and this he glanced through while he took his soup. How could he find time to read the papers? He scarcely knew what was going on in the world. But that was of no consequence, the chief thing was that these fellows should be beaten, and for that it was not necessary to study the newspapers. He would know the precise day and hour when things had reached this point. As yet, it must be confessed, things were not so far along, and that he also knew very well.

"There, again they've—" murmured the General.

"What did you say, papa?"

Silence. The General took his soup hastily and noisily—it dripped from the spoon into the plate—and had another look at the paper.

"Jacob—there's a draft somewhere!"

Jacob stepped out of the shadow of the Danzig baroque buffet, where he generally concealed himself and, walking carefully on tiptoe, tried all the doors and windows, although he knew that everything was properly closed. Jacob also

served at the table. The General liked to be served by a man in uniform even at home—it reminded him of the front. He hated women servants.

The silver shone with a chilly radiance—the table cover was like snow—and although the table was not much larger than an ordinary dining-table, it seemed to the General at times to be an endless snow-field. He knew that quite on the other side of this expanse of snow, his daughter was sitting, small and remote . . . at times it seemed to him as if people in general became more and more remote, more and more, every day more remote. Their voices often sounded as if they came from a great distance. Often he didn't hear them at all, they sounded so thin. This was because he was so overworked.

"There, they've shot down several thousand tons again!"

Noiselessly Jacob changed the plates.

Suddenly the General looked up. He seemed just to have noticed that Otto was not at the table.

"Otto was invited out, papa."

"On the last evening—?" A red flush rose to the General's face. His eyelashes raised themselves cautiously and his glance took in Ruth's face. This face was dainty, pale and of an uncommonly pure coloring. It was full of charm, without being in the least pretty. A dreamy distraction was spread over her features, and a smile lay on the somewhat too full red lips. Ruth felt her father's look, her eyelids trembled . . . but already the General's eyes were riveted upon his plate. The General did not like to meet his daughter's eyes. There was a reason for this, a very good reason, the explanation of which he owed to no one.

"A lot to do at the kitchen?"

"Yes, quite enough, papa. We are serving daily eight hundred meals."

"The deuce!" The General wiped his thin gray moustache and pushed back his chair. He offered Ruth his cheek

to kiss. She touched it with her soft lips (never failing to feel the thorny stubble) and for a second laid her hand upon her father's gray head. She had kept up this sort of good-night kiss from her earliest childhood. The General felt the soft pressure of her hand in his heart. Every evening. Every evening his love for his daughter, which during the day grew dim, dormant or was extinguished without leaving a trace, was awakened by this contact of her lips and hand. During the day he rarely ever thought of Ruth, and if she did come into his mind, quite by chance and very rarely, it never aroused any feeling, in fact, rather a certain chill. But in the evening his love flamed up under this contact. Sometimes this sensation lasted, and once it had even happened that the General tiptoed to Ruth's door late in the evening to listen and hear if she were breathing. There he stood in the dark corridor like a thief, his ear pressed against the door. His heart glowed with love.

But during the day—indifference, coldness. Strange!

"Good night, papa!" Ruth's voice sounded soft and fine.

"Good night."

The General arose from his chair with a rattle. Jacob clicked his heels together. Suddenly in a tone of command the General said: "When my son returns, tell him I wish to speak to him! But should he not be here by half-past eleven, I do not wish to be disturbed. In that case he's to come to my room early in the morning!"

"Very good, Herr General!" And Jacob rushed to the door. He knew that the young Lieutenant would not return until early in the morning, as was always the case. In fact, he had already ordered Jacob to apply cold water quite mercilessly should he not get up when he was called.

Ruth wished the servant a "Good night" in a gay voice, and slipped away to her room.

Ruth's little boudoir, like the adjoining bedroom, was always disorderly, and by day as well as night was in semi-

darkness. Articles of clothing, books, and stationery lay strewn about the rooms. The little salon which looked out on the Tiergarten was done in blue and white. The low fauteuils, upholstered in silk brocade with perpendicular blue and white stripes, had little worn places and were growing yellow. A medallion with the Sommerstorff coat-of-arms was embroidered on the back of the chairs: a hand holding a red rose. (This red rose played a great rôle in the Sommerstorff family history.)

A portrait of a young lady in a white oval frame hung over the little sofa which was usually the resting-place of Ruth's coat and hat: this lady was Margarete von Sommerstorff, later Hecht-Babenberg. The water color, done after the manner of Kaulbach, portrayed Ruth's mother at about the age of twenty, at the time of her marriage: a young girl, the narrow shoulders wrapped in a white lace scarf, a fan in her hand and a burning red rose in her hair. Where it waved the hair had the same shimmer as Ruth's, which sometimes appeared blonde and again brown just as the light fell upon it. The picture had one peculiarity. The large light-brown eyes, particularly emphasized by the painter, followed the spectator wherever he might be standing in the room. They did not leave his face and they smiled.

Ruth had only a dim remembrance of her mother. Something shy, infinitely warm, fleeting and fugitive. Soft lips, indescribably warm and indescribably soft, which had once kissed her when she was a little girl and old Therese had cried: "Kiss the lady, she's your mother!" Ruth remembered quite distinctly these words of Therese's, but to her everlasting distress she could not remember what this pale, shy, unfamiliar lady had said.

She also owned the white lace shawl worn by her mother in the portrait. At times, very rarely, she laid it about her shoulders and stuck a red rose of the same brilliant color in her hair; then the two women who bore so strong a resemblance smiled at each other.

Ruth slipped into her coat, singing softly to herself as she looked for her gloves, which as usual she had mislaid:

“Die Rose, die Lilie, die Taube, die Sonne,  
Die liebt’ ich einst alle in Liebeswonne.  
Ich lieb’ sie nicht mehr, ich liebe alleine  
Die Kleine, die Feine, die Reine, die Eine.”

Ruth adored Schumann.

But there, she had found her gloves. They had fallen into an empty vase.

## 9.

“Hello, cabby, are you free?”

Otto jumped into the cab. “Paradise Bar!” It was an old cab creaking in all its joints. The horse was lame and leaped forward with the most astounding bounds. My God, what have they done to this city! thought Otto, with a feeling of malice in his heart. His last visit was during the summer, when he had been granted a three weeks’ furlough to recover from a gas attack, but at that time the decay had not struck him so forcibly.

The horse’s hoofs gave out a lonely sound in the dark gorges of the streets. It had ceased snowing and slush had gathered in the gutters. A black rain of ashes poured down incessantly upon the dead charred city.

And formerly a surging sea of light! Shimmering pearl necklaces, blazing diadems on the roofs, furious wheels of fire on the reddened skies, melted lead oozed from the joints of the houses. The headlights of the bellowing herds of motors, the glistening squares of light formed by the shop windows, and happy people moving about in the light, women whose eyes shone and whose teeth sparkled. Laughter . . .

The cab came to a sudden stop. The skeleton of a horse stood there in his worn hide and trembled.

With a shiver Otto fled from this sinister darkness, just as all the world was fleeing to the oases of light scattered throughout the charred city, to the theaters, the concert halls, in order to escape from the shadows and specters of darkness. Like animals in a deluge, fleeing madly . . .

No sooner had Otto entered the magically lighted stalactite cavern which served as a garderobe than he felt safe. The air he loved was wafted out to him . . . perfumes, laughter, light, music. . . . It was not the very best of scents; it was sultry and seemed to cling like paste to his gums, but after all, it didn't matter.

Although the evening was still young, the rotunda of the Paradise Bar was crowded. But Otto was lucky enough to secure a small table near the balustrade—quite close to the figure of a youth garbed in a deadly green and raspberry-red, who stretched out his plaster arms and was sprayed by the colored rays of a fountain. Shining red and gold were the colors used in the decoration. Gayly-colored calyxes of flowers hung down from the golden ceiling, diffusing desire and pleasure. Insects of a poisonous green scraped the instruments and hammered away with little sticks. One of the green insects glided between the tables, playing in the ears of the guests.

Otto screwed his monocle in his eye so that all the world might see that he was an officer—and not by any means one of the many here—the many—who fed upon the carcasses left upon the battlefield. The hum of voices was all about him.

"Two years ago I loaned him fifty marks. He came to me . . . his boots . . . in fact everything . . . Waiter!"

"To-day he's worth millions. I estimate his fortune at four millions."

"Buy merchandise, merchandise . . . it makes no difference what kind . . . bankruptcy inconceivable . . ."

"Rudi is always half-seas over!"

Between a bald-headed man and a big vase of flowers, Otto caught a glimpse of a dark slender cocotte with bare shoulders ravishingly rounded, who responded to his glance. Below him near the fountain sat two men in evening clothes, the two women with them robed like princesses in costly gowns, jewels and flowers. The scent of the powder exhaled from their bared bosoms wafted up to him. How rosy that little ear—cocottes of course—but at all events flesh, breath, life.

Two men in dinner jackets had seated themselves at the adjoining table. Their thick smooth-shaven skulls and spongy dissipated faces seemed familiar to Otto. They were two captains of cavalry whom he had seen frequently at Stifter's in Unter den Linden when he ate lunch there with papa. They had with them two charming little creatures, to be sure not quite first class—perhaps shopgirls, who were already shrieking with laughter.

Gayly-colored paper serpents trailed through the air.

Yes, here indeed, Paradise was to be found and out there in the dark streets nothing but the naked reality. A few children frozen blue, offering matches for sale, an old woman with wet newspapers—and the doorman of the Bar stood there in his green coat like an archangel!

Berlin was buried in a rain of ashes, but here in this cave, she by some miracle had managed to preserve a last drop of her lascivious blood. With all his senses Otto drank in odors, voices, flesh—he was storing up for the future, for the long months when he would see nothing but rusted barbed wire and clouds formed by bursting shells.

“Reforms—then you do not believe in them?”

“Swindle, nothing but swindle. I'd sooner expect the heavens to fall—”

“But that would be fraud!”

“Fraud? Of course it would be! Do you know the name they have for the new man who is ruling us? The

five-minute match! He can only remain awake five minutes and then off he goes to sleep again!"

"God have mercy upon our souls!"

The ladies with the jewels broke into a laugh. He had really said it too comically, as if resigned to his fate and with a slight lisp.

The languishing violin of the green insect leading the orchestra sang in Otto's ear.

What did he see? What did he hear?

Dora's radiant eyes? Hedi's blonde hair behind the veil with the silver embroidery? Did he hear Dora's laugh? Not in the least.

He saw: night, horror, a landscape filled with craters, the zone of death. Rockets flare and the shells howl. Through the darkness sweating men are dragging off a wounded comrade on a canvas stretcher. By the glare of the gun fire he suddenly recognizes that it is he, he, he himself, whom the men are carrying off. His face is streaming with blood and he can hear quite distinctly the wheezy breath of the men who are carrying him . . .

A terrible pallor spread over Otto's face, and he opened his eyes wide. His pupils became distended, his eyes yawning craters full of horror . . . and this it was that he saw and heard while the green concert master was playing in his ear. . . . The terrible vision grew dimmer, and the next moment he was again sitting in the Paradise Bar. For some time he trembled with a faint sense of fright.

With a trembling hand he raised his glass and drank to the dark slender cocotte with the ravishingly rounded bare shoulders. The lady smiled graciously and at that moment the bald-headed man turned quickly.

The shoulders of this slender cocotte reminded Otto of Hedi. And while he was emptying his glass to his slender vis-à-vis, he was thinking of Hedi, with whom, thank God, everything was now at an end. He thought of her without



hatred but with a slight feeling of contempt. A lady . . . would a lady do such a thing as she had done in the summer, her farewell supper . . . ? And yet at this moment when a paper serpent thrown by the dark, slender lady was curling itself about his head, he was disposed to be magnanimous, to forgive her. We all have our weak moments.

"Oh, yes—this Hedi, she will probably sleep badly to-night!"

"Possibly she will also shed tears?"

"Just a few! . . . Here, waiter, Herr Ober—!"

How vain men are, how foolish!

It never occurred to Hedi to weep. She never gave him a thought.

She thought of the wide yellow overcoat. A gentleman wishes to pay homage to a lady. Well, then. He buys white roses, although they cost a fortune, and leaves them lying on the table. Not a word, not a glance: a gentleman!

Her castles had fallen to dust, the castles with the coat-of-arms of the Hecht-Babenbergs: the red horse in a blue field. All vanished! But Hedi was already busy building new castles. Far more splendid, more daring ones.

Ah, how she had wasted her youth! For three long years she had waited for Otto's letter, and herself had sent several hundred letters to the front. And this war would never end, she could have grown old waiting. How foolish! And this family of the Hecht-Babenbergs, this arrogant General in whose eyes a Privy Councillor was a mere clerk, nothing more. He had always regarded her as a second-class creature, without a long line of ancestors like the Babenbergs, whose pedigree could be traced back to the Crusades.

Yes, perhaps she would have tea at the Kaiserhof again to-morrow. In the first place, she liked it there, the music, the elegance, the carefree atmosphere—and in the second

place it was just possible that this Herr Stroebel or Herr von Stroebel . . .

Here Clara sat up in bed. The two sisters slept together in a small room giving on the courtyard. "Are you asleep, Hedi?" whispered Clara. "Just look at the moon how it's scudding along!" Hedi did not answer and Clara bent over her bed. "Ah, you're not asleep at all!" she laughed. Quite unexpectedly she received a stinging box on the ear, for Hedi was in no mood to listen to Clara's chatter. The little goose could not know that at that very moment Hedi was tearing away in a fifty-horsepower car, with goggles on her eyes, Stroebel at the wheel . . . if a tire burst there would be a catastrophe.

Clara sat quite still gazing at the moon. Her face was bathed in light, and she shone like a ghost. She breathed in the light, she was entirely filled with light, and liquid light ran through her veins.

Paradise lay spread out before her eyes.

## 10.

Otto wrapped himself up in his overcoat.

The best thing to do was to look matters squarely in the face. Was not that so? His train would leave at the appointed time, that was a dead certainty. He would be on it, no matter what happened. Cold faces, stiff bows, loud conversation in voices artificially trained to keep steady. Then would come the moment when a distant rumbling would be heard. The front! Somewhere in the desert the train would stop, nothing but men, nothing but soldiers. Motor lorries, vehicles of all kinds, voices of command, darkness, dirt, rain, the smell of devastated regions. Guns rumbling, shells whimpering, just as they always did. Comrades crawling out of the dugouts, hands stretched out in greeting, everybody jovial, everybody gay, but everything—nothing but lies.

He did not even know whether or not he would find them in the old position, which lay exposed to the enemy's guns, day and night, but nevertheless was agreeable compared to the shallow trenches they occupied in Flanders, where they stood up to their breasts in icy water and had to hobble about on crutches, completely paralyzed.

But it is not that, not the fire, the wet, the cold and the hardships. It is the gigantic face of death grinning at one everywhere out there at the front. It is nothing but the terrible dread of death when one loves life—nothing else!

That's the naked truth!

His steps were halted by a joyful fright.

Was there not something white at the window—the white book? No, nothing, only the reflection of the gaslights. The house dark. The iron gates leading to the garden closed and locked. Otto touched the knocker, it was icy cold. The bare branches of the bushes whipped to and fro, and through the crumbling wall of ivy Otto could look into the corridors and rooms and see the figures of the saints in their grotesque distortions.

She slept, soundly and deeply, but her personality shone over the darkened house.

Otto's way led obliquely through the dark rustling Tiergarten. Stroebel lived in In den Zelten. The merriment must have reached its climax by this time—yes, hurry, hurry! Greedily seize what there is left of the night. Forward!

Faster and faster his steps hurried forward, driven on by desire and anguish of spirit. Time flew under the soles of his feet. With every step a little fragment of time was left behind, a pounded grain of time's dust flew with mad rapidity into the past. Yes, time was like sand, running sand, madly running sand, nothing else. An ocean, an ocean of sand, and soon a century had gone by—soon a thousand

years. A gigantic crater gushes forth, and cities, nations, continents, begin to move forward and all run down—into nothing. Time, what a terrible thought! Happy the beasts and the gods which know nothing of time.

At this moment the moon came from behind a heavy bank of clouds. It also raced madly—just like everything else in the world that was trying to escape from certain destruction—raced madly, although a thousand years made no difference to the moon. But one day the tiresome visage would burst and, together with the dust of this earth, would form the tip of a comet's tail which to the great astonishment of the astronomers would suddenly appear in the lense of their telescopes—somewhere in the unthinkable space.

Seven hours more! Otto rushed furiously forward. The branches of the trees in the park tried to seize him as he passed. And suddenly Otto screamed aloud—frantically, wildly, like some animal. He was young and loved life.

## 11.

“Just a moment!” The General had already opened the portfolio containing the documents to be finished to-night. He had one of the keys of the portfolio in his possession, the other was in the hands of an officer in his bureau. No unauthorized person could cast an eye upon these secret documents; everything was well organized to the very smallest detail.

He leaned back in his chair. The tea party at Dora's had fatigued him. Nothing so fatigued him of late as the noise of voices engaged in a general conversation. It was quite different in the conference room where he controlled everything by a mere raising of his eyebrows. But in a drawing-room where every one seemed to think he had a right to speak when and just as long and as loud as he liked, yes: how terribly loud—that was it— Just a moment—!

Reserves—enormous reserves—they will roll up like a tidal wave . . . the General had already fallen asleep.

But scarcely had he closed his eyes, scarcely came the first deep breathing from his breast, than he was awakened. Something was tapping on the windowpane—something that sounded like a finger, a finger nail. He turned his head; through the glass stared a small shining steel-blue face. A mask as big as a man's fist of a brilliant blue—in fact of an intense blue like the flame of an alcohol lamp in a dark room—and eyes like those of a dead fish gleaming with a dull luster. A threat and a challenge seemed to emanate from this shining steel-blue face staring in at the window, although it was absolutely motionless.

The fright caused by the face shining in at the window was so great that the General now really awakened with a start. He looked at the clock and saw that he had slept a full hour. Involuntarily he turned his eyes in the direction of the window, where, naturally, nothing was to be seen. The green curtains were closely drawn. He cleared his throat loudly and unembarrassedly as was his wont, and parting the curtains took a look at the street. Nothing to be seen, of course. Rain, darkness, not a soul as far as the eye could reach.

But suddenly this face by which he had been so startled reappeared—this time quite near in the room—even to the eyes with the dead luster. It is he, yes, yes, it is the man who was there this afternoon, thought the General. He had paid very little attention to the face that afternoon. It is the little old man who delivered the letter.

By the way a wholly incoherent letter which he had read hastily—incoherent foolish stuff that this little old man with the blue face—where was the letter, anyway? Here, now just look at this envelope—will you?

Although the portfolio containing the documents lay there waiting to be gone through, the General could not resist the impulse—peculiar! His curiosity had become awakened,

more than that. He unfolded the letter and read it—slowly, more and more slowly, and with closer attention.

His face also grew red at the second reading, not a dull brick red but fiery red. His brow displayed ominous furrows . . .

What—? No, he had really not read the letter.

But—? What was the man driving at—fallen, at the Hill of Quatre Vents—well, and—what's this?—There was even a mention of Ruth, for that was surely what the allusion meant—what? No, he saw now that he had only hastily glanced through the letter; he had remembered nothing except that it contained a request for an interview.

Muddled. Worse, far worse than muddled:

“—respectfully beg you to receive me. My only son, Robert, fought under the General. He fell during the storm of Quatre Vents on the fifth of August. He was a soldier through and through, the only pride and hope of his parents. I beg you graciously to inform me where his grave is located and especially whether his grave is exposed to shells! I am so disquieted by this that I am completely unable to sleep—”

What? What does the man mean? Whether the grave . . . ?

The General is in a state of terrible excitement. His eyes become fixed.

The Hill? Yes, the letter had awakened distinct recollections of the Hill.

This dark monster, bristling with guns, belching fumes of smoke, again appeared before the eyes of the General: Quatre Vents! August 4, 5, 6—on the evening of the sixth it was lost!

Motor lorries swarming with men clattered by on the fourth, fifth and sixth. Red faces, eyes gleaming, they waved their helmets: Hurrah—and the General, standing on the steps of his château, saluted. What an uproar! The earth trembled . . . he could hear it now! Hell! A French

aeroplane fell in flames in the park of the château, in the center of the rose garden.

"Herr General, the battalion of sharpshooters!"

"I'm coming!"

And the lorries swung, rolled, raced by: Hurrah!

The Hill of Quatre Vents was a cemetery twelve stories high. Germans, French, Germans, French. But they were not arranged in layers according to nations, the mines tore up entire stories and hurled the dead through the air. The spades struck upon the skull of a Frenchman, only to fall with the next stroke upon the boot of a German infantryman. It also struck bones, not fresh ones but old yellow bones and skeletons, for there was an old cemetery on the Hill of Quatre Vents. Formerly a village lay up there—where was it now? Crushed to atoms. The mines had carried away the top of the hill. Tons of dynamite were stuffed into the galleries of the mines—whole companies of Germans and French flew into the air. . . . Hoch Deutschland! Vive la France! They never returned.

Only twice had the General set foot on the hill. Once on a starry night (unforgettable the sight of the sparkling constellations!) when everything was quiet. The trenches exhaled an icy chill and decaying odor, one stepped on human bodies without knowing whether they were dead or alive—otherwise there was nothing so terrifying about the hill over which detached bullets whistled, and the General said to himself that all the stories about the horrors of Quatre Vents were exaggerated. The second time the real face of the hill was somewhat more visible. The General came at dawn when the French were throwing heavy flying trench-bombs which exploded like collapsing houses. Whole swarms of long-necked greedy birds of prey swooped down upon the top. At times he was shoved forcibly into a dugout or one of the transverse galleries when the shadow of a bomb fell too near.

Otherwise the General would not have stirred from

the spot. In view of his officers and men who were looking out of the galleries, he would rather have let himself be torn to pieces without the quiver of an eyelash. That was the time he made the terrible faux pas—he confessed it quite openly—by asking that awkward question. It must have been that under the strain of the hissing steel birds and the crashing of the avalanche of shells his brain had simply refused to work. In one of the leveled sections of the trenches there lay a cloth steeped in blood, something like a ragged undershirt in a lake of blood. There was such quantities of blood that the General could never have supposed—in short, he asked: “Well, I see that you have been slaughtering?” What an inconceivable break! The trench officers answered with an embarrassed smile. And suddenly the General saw a fragment of a man sticking to the wall of the trench, nearby a piece of his head with its short hair. How painful this incident was to him! Even to-day he recalled with complete mortification the embarrassed smile of the exhausted-looking, mud-covered officers.

By eight o’clock he was again in his headquarters, having his breakfast.

The General never again set foot upon the Hill, but he saw it as it was taken; that is to say he didn’t see the hill itself, but only the night and a cluster of red signals flaming up unceasingly through the night—help!—only to die out again hopelessly.

This, then, was the Hill of Quatre Vents!

The General walked the floor breathing heavily. He could distinctly hear the voice of his adjutant. The battalion of sharpshooters, Herr General! Yes, he must have been on one of those lorries—one of the hundreds—who with red faces and eyes dripping sweat—he, that one—what was his name—Robert! On the fifth! Yes, on the fifth he still had hoped . . . By noon on the sixth he was undecided and ordered a final counter-attack. . . . In the evening nothing was to be seen but the red balls of light . . .



Gradually his excitement passed off. Suddenly he saw the portfolio of documents lying on the table.

What peculiar people there are! His grave? That any one should presume to send him such a letter!

And then—what did he write at the end:

“—should Your Excellency be good enough to grant me an audience, I should be able to give some information in regard to the ‘gracious Fräulein’ which would undoubtedly be of interest to Your Excellency.” The poor man . . .

Yes, indeed, strange people . . .

The General tore up the letter and threw the fragments into the waste paper basket.

But an hour later his hand was still trembling. Had he at that time been sent the support he asked for, Quatre Vents would be in his hands to-day!

## 12.

“Is it you, Otto?”

“I thought surely the police had arrived. You’re making as usual such a terrible racket!”

Stroebel always admitted his guests himself. After ten o’clock there were no servants in the house, as he wished to be entirely unembarrassed.

A riotous noise came from the apartment. The entire house trembled. This Herr Stroebel—or Herr von Stroebel, no one knew just which—owned nothing before the war but a few well-fitting suits of clothes, among them one of black and white check which was so conspicuous that people were still talking about it, a high hat and several pairs of elegant, somewhat dandified, shoes. That was all he had to his name—except connections.

To-day he was rich, he owned an automobile factory and his connections had become still better.

He had also been at the front for a short time—but that is a chapter all by itself.

"What atrocious weather!" exclaimed Otto, shaking himself. His eyes flickered restlessly.

"The weather's not the worst," answered Stroebe, who had thrown himself into a chair in the hall and was knocking the tips of his patent leather pumps together. "It's the darkness! A northern city without light—can you imagine such a thing? It's a bad joke! A northern city has been wrested from the light and is the product of light. It's the light that gives inspiration, energy and imagination. In the south—you were never in the south?—there one doesn't need light—heaven, stars.—But up here? Without light a northern city sinks into utter insignificance. Rob London of light and it's nothing but a miserable little fishing village—"

"Do you call Berlin a northern city?"

"Of course. Formerly it was not noticeable. But at all events,—rotten, Otto, rotten—this city is going to the dogs. Yes, possibly it's already gone—we no longer know anything for certain."

Otto was startled. A shot was heard inside. Screams. Clapping of hands.

"Is some one shooting here?"

"Yes, the Steam Roller is here, disporting himself as a prize shot. You must know him? Captain Falk."

The smoke, the faces, the wild noise—Otto's restlessness instantly vanished. That never-to-be-forgotten scene popped into his mind: the night before the regiment left for the front, one of his comrades, a Captain Below—long dead, one of the first to fall—who wished to retire somewhat earlier from the love feast ordered a cab to come to the Casino. It was an easy matter simply to buy the cab from its owner! This cab was driven up to the stone steps leading down into the park. Here, volunteers! Immediately the cab was filled to overflowing. The comrades hung to the old vehicle like a swarm of bees. A slight impetus

and the drive into the abyss began. The cab went into a thousand pieces but no one was hurt.

Now only six officers of the regiment were still living, two of these crippled.

Otto entered the rooms with a beaming face, ready to plunge head over ears in the whirlpool of gayety and take part in every excess. The atmosphere of comradeship that greeted him did him good. Here every one knew him. Here, for instance, every one knew that in 1915 despite the heavy shooting he had dragged a wounded French officer who was lying between the positions into the shelter of the trenches—not out of compassion, no, but only to prove what a devil of a fellow this Hecht-Babenberg was!

What a crowd! Nearly all gray, pallid and exhausted. Captain Wunderlich's shining cat's eyes blinked, his crutches, as usual, resting on the arm of his chair. One black kid glove on his wooden hand. A young lieutenant, pale as death, with his head bandaged, just out of the hospital.

A man in a dinner jacket, blond and handsome, with his empty sleeve tucked in his pocket. There was also a number of billiard-ball heads with bumps on their skulls, majors and higher officers. But they were in the minority. A green face wearing a monocle—even a blind man—was among the company—sitting there gazing contentedly at the light. Otto discovered some of his father's officers: Adjutant Weisbach, the gigantic Major Wolff. Many of them had been wounded for the third or fourth time, to-morrow it would be their turn again. The war went on.

Everybody was in a reckless mood, a carefree, almost childish expression lay upon their pallid, wrinkled and dissipated faces.

"At last, here he is—here he comes!" screamed Captain Falk as Otto entered. This Captain Falk with the peculiar nickname of Steam Roller was a small man, thin as a rake, with red hair, ashen-gray face—only about the eyes there

were sickly yellow and olive-green rings. He spoke rapidly and with a high falsetto which had a disagreeable and provocative sound. Like Captain Wunderlich, the man-hunter, he wore the highest orders. He was a foolhardy fellow, had taken part in all the heaviest fighting at both fronts, and it was a sheer miracle to every one who knew him that he was still alive. He himself claimed to be bullet-proof. Now and again he turned up in Berlin and caroused away his few days of leave. For three or four nights he never went to bed, and then slept all the way back to the front.

"Hurry, Hecht!" he cried, fooling with his pistol. "You still have a chance of winning Saharet!"

Just then little Saharet rushed towards Otto with a little cat's scream.

"You'll see," she cried. "I know Otto!"

She was a little black-haired imp with round eyes like a cat. She owed her name to her resemblance—very remote—to the dancer Saharet. Formerly she was called—yes, who knew? Stroebel kept her as a sort of house-cat. She wriggled about on the chairs and telephoned; that was her only occupation. She spoke with a foreign accent like a Russian, a Russian princess, and played the grande dame. In short, she was superbly ridiculous. What reason would Stroebel otherwise have had for keeping the Saharet?

Now the thing was this: Saharet was to be offered as a prize to any one consenting to be a target for Steam Roller. To the one who would let a wine glass be shot from his head, she would grant an intimate rendezvous—with or without the public. She had once seen "William Tell" in some suburban theater or other.

"Agreed, splendid, agreed!" Captain Steam Roller had just shot two liquor glasses from the buffet at a distance of five meters, he was ready for anything—a glass from some one's head—please, just command me!

But here began the difficulty. No one seemed to care about risking his head—and Saharet was already feeling

offended that her tender tête-à-tête was so meanly estimated. She turned her cat's eyes about the circle, pouted, begged—just then Otto arrived and she rushed at him.

Otto the knight, the Lohengrin of Saharet!

Otto simply couldn't refuse—the eyes of his comrades were fastened upon him, the laughter, the pleading flattery of little Saharet! Without a moment's thought, inspired only by the wish immediately to become the center of the company—what a devil of a fellow this Otto is!—he declared himself willing. A glass of champagne and the performance can begin.

“What? At once?”—Bravo! Tremendous applause!

Saharet was so delighted that she danced around on one leg, clapping her tiny hands. “Ah, how delightful, this Otto!” She herself presented the champagne after tasting it.

“Then go ahead, get ready!” cried Captain Falk with wild eyes.

Otto was placed against the wall amidst shrieks of laughter. Meanwhile it was discovered to the general astonishment of all present that a glass couldn't be balanced on his head without some assistance. A small book, please! Upon this, finally, the little lieutenant just out of the hospital succeeded in balancing the glass of champagne. Saharet, however, immediately protested. The glass was too large. That would be no trick at all! She herself selected a very small wine glass, pulled up a chair and placed it with her own hands upon Otto's head. “No, really, how splendid of you, Otto!”

“Now, ready!” screamed Steam Roller. “Get out of the way!”

“Remember—our little tête-à-tête!”

“What do you mean—our little tête-à-tête! No, no—”

“Well, I like that—”

“A kiss—Otto—a kiss!”

“Very good—I'll do it just for a kiss!”

"Stand back. Don't speak, Hecht—or else the glass will fall!"

"This is complete madness!" protested the giant Major Wolff, who was still comparatively sober. "You should forbid it, Stroebe!"

"Why should I forbid it?" replied Stroebe, astonished. "No one has less right to do so than the host."

Captain Falk strengthened his nerves with another glass of brandy. "If you think that I mean to stand here forever," said Otto impatiently, and the glass shook on his head.

"At once, I beg you—I'm about to fire," screamed Captain Falk.

"Attention, gentlemen!" Captain Falk swung the pistol. But at that moment he lurched a few steps to one side. He turned indignantly. "I beg you most respectfully not to pull at my coat-tails—"

"You'd better give up this thing!" said Major Wolff.

"Why?" screamed Captain Falk with a threatening countenance. "The moment I press the trigger I'll stand as immovable as a statue. You can count upon me. Well, then, I'm about to fire."

"Be quiet!" called Saharet and pressed her hands to her heart. How exciting it was!

The muzzle of the pistol was aimed at Otto. Slowly the round hole moved upwards. "Let no one say a word to me now!" screamed Captain Falk, "or else I'll fire the bullet into Hecht's head." Dead silence. Saharet stood with folded hands. Stroebe watched Otto closely, who winked his eyes imperceptibly when the mouth of the weapon was aimed just between his eyes.

Otto had assumed an indifferent somewhat gay expression. I've only one wish, he was thinking, and that is that the bullet will strike me full in the temple. Full in the temple and then—Finale! Go ahead and fire! He was perfectly composed. . . .

Just then the mouth of the pistol was raised a millimeter higher. Captain Falk's teeth were set so tight that the cheek bones protruded from his lean, ashen face. Then he held his breath and at that second the glass was shattered to pieces.

What applause! What an ovation!

Instantly Saharet took to flight out of coquetry! Glasses shattered, chairs broken. She tore the cover from the table carrying down everything in the débris. Merely out of politeness, for no other reason in the world, Otto joined the pursuit. This small miserable little mouth had no charm for him. Finally Saharet took refuge in a corner of the library. She could not move either backwards or forwards, and attempted to climb up on top of the bookcase. But when this attempt failed she surrendered and crying for help resigned herself to her fate.

Otto's hands were already extended—when he suddenly tottered and grew as white as the wall. Excited by the pursuit, intoxicated, he had been seized by a sudden attack of dizziness. Saharet's face grew indistinct, her eyes—instead he saw a horrible, half-decayed face with glistening teeth, a death's head.

"I shall be killed!" shot through his brain with the certainty of a revelation which admitted of no doubt. And it was just at this moment that he grew as white as the wall.

Again the pupils of his eyes extended, again his eyes became craters full of terror. Yes, now he understood!

Saharet, nibbling at a piece of chocolate, sat on the high back of Major Wolff's chair who held the bank. The pallid dissipated faces with the graying temples crowded about the table. Even the blind man was playing, having entered into a partnership with the one-armed officer in a dinner jacket. Stroebel was the only one not playing. He kept the glasses filled.

Otto won—quite contrary to his customary bad luck at cards. In a few moments he had won three thousand marks although he was playing without deliberation, wholly unconscious it seemed. And that, too, was unusual!

And if I should fall, he thought, what would it matter? Many hundreds of thousands have fallen, why should I, just I, be spared? And after all, what does it matter?

Just once more, once again will we question fate.

The bank was losing steadily. It had lost six times and it was wholly improbable that luck would be against it a seventh time.

"Three thousand mark stakes, Major?" asked Otto. Should he win against all the laws of probability, then he would really believe it, then it would be as good as certain . . .

For the seventh time the bank lost.

"I shall fall, that's certain!" Otto counted the bills which the Major pushed towards him and stuffed them into his pocket.

"And I shall never see her again!"

He rose.

"Four thousand three hundred—first battery!" commanded Captain Weisbach, who had fallen asleep in his chair and lay with his mouth open, his pale brow wrinkled.

### 13.

Night, the rain poured, black rain.

The giant city slept, she panted in her sleep. The people sweated in their beds, despite the icy cold of the houses. The cold sweat stood on their brows, open-eyed they stared into the darkness. It was no longer as it had been at the beginning of the war, when the big city used to cry out at night—you remember, don't you? Every night horrible screams resounded from the houses and courtyards, horrible moaning, despairing sobs? Telegrams rained down upon the



big city: fallen, fallen, thy son, thy husband, thy lover, the provider of thy children, fallen, fallen—and the big city shrieked! The pealing of bells announcing victory still rang through the air, youths and bearded men, adorned with flowers, hurried to the front . . .

Now they no longer screamed, they lay quite still, the cramped fingers dug into their breasts, they sat up in their beds and whispered—a name.

The great city lay dark and still.

Howling and moaning, the trains rolled along between the rows of darkened houses. These were the transports which came creeping into the half-lighted stations under cover of night, bringing the wounded men from the battle-fields. The same men who had gone forth adorned with flowers. They must be hidden from the light of day. Gigantic shadows flickered over the high dusty walls of the railway stations, stretcher-bearers moved here and there, automobiles on their rubber tires glided surreptitiously through the streets, to and fro, to and fro. Then the lights at the stations were extinguished, and they were again shrouded in darkness until another incoming train shrieked: "I am bringing them . . ."

And again the gigantic shadows flickered over the dusty walls, the bearers moved here and there, again the automobiles glided on their rubber tires through the streets, to and fro. The whole night through, every night. Now a train moans—and many, many others are on the way, far out there between the potato and turnip fields over which the rain is sweeping. Many, many thousands . . .

Every night the waves of this bloody ocean beat against the heart of the big city.

In the gray of the morning the silent hearses drive off from the hospitals, out through the suburbs, farther and farther, until they reach the cemeteries. Loaded down with boxes. In them lie those who marched out adorned with flowers, now without clothing, without underwear, without

boots, naked, but they no longer freeze. It is the beginning of February, 1918 . . .

The streets flow silently on, endless. The lanterns on the street-corners are like grinning specters. The signs hang crooked on the plundered houses, cold, pallid, like corpses. The firms are extinct, the names no longer exist, the stocks are exhausted. In the dark nights the shadows come trooping back to sit at the desks, creep through the empty store-rooms. Shadows of messengers and postmen crowd the stairway, all fallen. Street-cleaners sweep up the dark street, fallen. Shadows of omnibus horses flit between the waves of hurrying shadows which deluge the street, an ocean. The drivers of the 'busses, fallen—the horses fallen. Every night the dead return to the big city.

The watchman glances anxiously around the corner. His teeth chatter with fear, the gigantic corpse-like signs stare at him, they beckon to him, they smile at him—ah, such a peculiar smile!

There the dead street trembles! A step resounds, quick, hurried! A double-quick march step, the step of a runner, racing breathlessly. A voice calls out. The sleepless people in their beds start up: fearfully resounds the voice through the dark city. Their perspiring hair stands on end—what is he calling? Again? Just as he does every night . . .

A wide field-gray army coat floats around the corner. It rushes through the streets. Fists are raised in curses. Threateningly the voice rolls over the dark houses:

"Woe, woe to them who inhabit the earth!"

Are those the words?

The listening people in their beds do not understand the words. They are old, old words—thousands of years old, but they feel that they are the words of malediction and destruction.

The watchman flees. A soldier! They are quick to use their knives these days . . .

Already the voice is heard from a distance. It resounds

along the endless streets, on out to the suburbs, on out to the outlying fields. For a long time the sound of the voice echoes between the rows of sleeping houses.

The house corners are dark. But as the army coat flutters by, a sudden light streams from the dark walls; the black stones open their eyes. An inscription gleams out of the darkness:

*ALL MEN ARE BROTHERS!*

Like a spectral garment the wide fluttering army coat appears in the light of a distant street lamp. There it has vanished!

Again everything is quiet, again the great city lies dead like a city of ashes.

But out there in the suburbs everything glistens. A girdle of dazzling lights is drawn about the city of ashes—like glittering magic palaces, the factories swim in a flood of light. The red steam hisses, shadows emerge from the chimneys, thick and black like battleships at top speed. The wheels revolve, the earth trembles. Hundreds of thousands at the lathes, the oil squirts—other thousands carry shells, screwed, polished. Thousands and thousands of pale exhausted-looking women sit in the bright light of the arc lamps, filling, weighing, packing. And the heavily laden trains pant their way out there.

The whole land is working to-night as it has worked every night—millions of hands—executing the orders of Death!

14.

The Tiergarten rustled, its depths rumbled like the surf of the ocean. The treetops ground together in the darkness and at times a branch whipped futilely against the sky. The rain fell in unceasing torrents.

Darkness, not a light far and wide. Yet wait a moment, there's a light in one window of the General's house. The window to the right of the entrance, Otto's room.

Dawn was approaching.

On the edge of the Tiergarten stood a policeman in his raincoat. Hark, what is that? A shot? He scraped his heavy boots against the asphalt and walked a few steps across the street. He looked over to the gardens lying at the back of the Government buildings. Possibly some one in the Wilhelmstrasse had shot himself? One of the Ministers? What? "And yet it was distinctly a shot," said the policeman and withdrew farther into the shadows of the Tiergarten. Every night some one shot himself here—a soldier, a bankrupt, an outcast. The policeman stared into the dusky park as if he would frighten away the darkness with his glance of authority.

Otto's room, lying just to the right of the entrance, was still brightly lighted. The rain kept up its melancholy song.

A light now appeared in the apartments to the left. The door to the General's bedroom was opened and a shaft of light penetrated through the curtains.

The broad figure of the General appeared in the lighted doorway. He was in his dressing gown and staggered like a man drunk with sleep. He kept losing his vermilion red slippers as he felt his way about in the bathroom. A shadow crawled along before him.

"What did you say—?" He cleared his throat, his throat was dry, for the General slept with his mouth open and snored. "Wounded, did you say?" He endeavored to tie the cord of his dressing gown in order not to take cold. Again he lost one of his slippers, and sought for it with his naked foot.

"In the hand—the Herr Lieutenant—"

"You would certainly think that he understood how to handle a weapon!" screamed the General to the servant. This should really have been said to Otto himself, but in

moments of rage he preferred to address himself to his inferiors.

"Turn on the light!"

His head emerged from his flesh-colored dressing gown, red with rage. This dressing gown also had vermilion facings, not so wide as those of his greatcoat, but of the same color.

"When he was packing—? What's all this stammering about!"

"The Herr Lieutenant was trying to put the revolver into its case, when it went off—quite by itself. It went off that way once before!"

With furious steps the General passed through the rooms. The flesh-colored dressing gown floated out behind him. But suddenly he stopped, and felt for the door frame with his hand. "A glass of water, Jacob!" he said, "and then, do you hear—call my daughter, immediately—but you are not to awaken her—call Therese and have her call my daughter. Wangel must bring the car around immediately."

The blood had rushed from his head, and he had grown as pale as death. He staggered a few steps backwards, until his hand rested on the back of a chair. His breath came in short gasps.

"And now let me have a glass of water!"

The General had cast only a cursory glance through Otto's half-opened door. Otto stood there, booted and spurred, sleek and shaven, everything ready for his departure. On the floor stood his small gray officer's trunk. He looked completely sober and composed, without a trace of intoxication.

And then he saw a towel—rolled together like a be-smearred bloody bunch of rags. One of the General's weaknesses was that he couldn't endure the sight of blood. It had always been a matter of embarrassment to him—at the front where it could not always be avoided—but it was a

weakness dating from the time he was a cadet. It was quite hopeless to fight against it.

Therese could be heard knocking at Ruth's door and calling her in a half-loud voice. Then the door opened. Therese vanished into Ruth's room and did not return.

Well—?

Finally after a long time Therese again appeared. Her face was agitated. She remained standing helplessly at the door. Her name was not really Therese but she had been called that ever since she had been in the General's service. Her real name was Ernestine. Therese's tongue was often paralyzed in the General's presence. In the first place she was afraid of him, she avoided conversation with him, she lived by herself at the back of the house and was seldom to be seen. But in special cases her fear increased to genuine terror. And at this moment the General looked genuinely terrifying in his flesh-colored dressing gown and his red slippers. Her eyes overflowed with desperation just as they had done that time when she was called to testify before the court. That time when the General brought suit and she was cross-questioned about everything under the sun. That time when peace had fled the General's house and only tears remained. Therese felt that now again something was wrong.

The General only stared at her—he didn't understand. His mustache trembled, a symptom that Therese knew well, and she made a desperate attempt to articulate. Her old face puckered into a thousand wrinkles, as if she were about to burst into tears. Her fingers plucked at her clothing rapidly thrown on.

"Ruth is not here!"

The General had not heard rightly.

"She's not in her room!"

"Not here—?"

But just at this moment his attention was diverted by a noise at the front door. A key was turned in the lock

and he waited tensely to see what would happen next. At first just a small hand in a gray glove. Then the fur trimming of a coat, and finally Ruth in her own person stood framed in the middle of the door. Rain drops lay on her little fur cap. She did not seem startled. Her brown eyes, the soft, glowing eyes of the Sommerstorffs, were turned questioningly upon the General.

And then her gaze began to waver. The light in her eyes was extinguished, and they grew dark.

## BOOK II

### 1.

**D**AY was dawning and still the girdle of lights encircled Berlin. A few weeks earlier, in January, the dazzling factories in the suburbs suddenly lay dark for several nights. The iron doors remained closed, the wheels stood still, the furnace fires were extinguished. The hundreds of thousands of active hands, where were they? What had happened?

Strike—to put it briefly! Strike, just at the very moment when preparations were being made for the final great offensive which was to end in victory. English money was circulating, declared the General, English money was rolling through the streets of Berlin, millions upon millions. A multitude of agents had been sent out by Albion to undermine the home front. The place was alive with spies. Notices were pasted on the houses, fly-leaves were circulated in the factories—English money was all-powerful.

It got as far as rioting out there in the suburbs. Patrols reconnoitered in the streets, there were troops of mounted police with carbines, machine guns were stationed in the attics here and there—just let them come—from out there! Half-grown youths marched through Unter den Linden whistling derisively. When they did this the police rushed out of the houses and gave each of them a box on the ear.

Street cars were overturned. They passed through the streets, coupled together in twos and threes, with their window-panes broken in. English money had brought things to a nice fix.

The strikers sent a deputation to negotiate. But the



Minister—his backbone had suddenly stiffened—refused, declined their overtures, if you please!

He demanded legally authorized representatives. He scented an impropriety, something which had never been known before, something which took the liberty of upsetting, of shaking the foundations . . .

The strikers demanded bread and the government promised to give it them.

The strikers demanded—they only hinted at it, but it was plainly to be seen from their illegal, highly treasonable conduct. . . . It seemed to them that the time had come to deliberate. Ducal coronets and kings' crowns would be bestowed, here and there, on all sorts of relations. Well and good, if it gave pleasure to any one; but, nevertheless, it seemed to them that the time had arrived at least to begin deliberations. The last copper kettle had disappeared, confiscated from the kitchen of the poor working woman, the locomotives collapsed on the rails, and young boys and cripples were drilling in the barracks. In the last analysis, America was a power to be reckoned with, even though she might not be able to build aeroplanes, as had been proven black on white, nor transport an army across the ocean. But for all that! German troops were standing in Finland, in the Caucasus, in . . .

No, they did not say it in so many words, but they wished to point out quite modestly that the time had really arrived . . .

But it was just this—ahem!—that offended the Minister. He suspected . . .

Finally the generals took the matter in hand and in the twinkling of an eye the strike was brought to an end. It was only necessary to employ the right tactics, and order was restored. The generals were for individual treatment. Every man who could handle a gun was sent into the trenches, others wandered into prison and some, indeed, into lunatic asylums. The smashed-in windows of the

street cars were replaced by new ones. Nothing had happened. Nothing remained but a faint subterranean rumbling, imperceptible to ears protruding from the skulls of old men.

Although the strike had lasted only a few days the General spoke of the possibility of victory thereby being endangered. It *could* be, merely a possibility. . . .

This all had happened in January. But now the innumerable hands, eaten up by the bad oil that squirted from the lathes and produced oil scratches, were again at work day and night. The fairy-like factories swam in a sea of light by night and the metropolis was again encircled by a girdle of lights. And in the gray of the morning, at the time the shifts were changed, trains rolled by crowded with men as heretofore, as if nothing had happened. Hundreds of yellow faces in every compartment, hundreds of yellow faces hanging upon the steps and running-boards, on the roofs, everywhere. And the poor exhausted-looking girls who packed the carriages shrieked and screamed.

On this gray morning also the trains filled with the workmen—faces yellow and pale as death—rolled out at the time the shifts were changing. Bundles of clothes, coughing and freezing, hurried through the streets of the suburbs, in order to pass the control at the iron doors in time. The western section of the city still lay in deep slumber, the watchmen, whose business it was to watch over the slumbers of the rich, yawned.

On this morning the regular train for the West front left the station on the minute. A corpse looked out of one of the windows—even whistled somewhat mournfully. The corpse was Captain Falk.

Where in the deuce is that boy? But Otto did not put in his appearance, and Captain Falk drew up the window, wrapped himself up in his overcoat and in a minute was fast asleep, even before the train had pulled out of the station.

Steam Roller was on his way home . . .

The day hung over the potato and turnip fields east of Berlin and low-hanging clouds dragged their way past the "garden colonies," between the red and yellow brick walls of the suburbs, over the rubbish heaps filled with débris of buildings, pieces of paper and battered tin pails. But behind the gray clouds a flashing light was to be seen. The light licked greedily the edge of clouds and a blaze shot forth. The red and yellow brick walls of the suburban houses began to glow, the window panes flashed, and a gleam sparkled in the million eyes of the big city. The trumpets in the barracks blared and thousands of men arose from their miserable couches.

A cascade of light shot through the window of a tenement house in the north-eastern part of the city—a gray sullen-looking house across the façade of which stretched in gigantic letters the inscription "Pawnbroker"—and fell upon an open book. This book lay on a small table close to the window of this wretched room. The book shone, fire seemed to issue from it: it was the Bible!

Many of the passages were underlined, and upon this one in particular the light had fallen:

"And the Kings of the earth and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondsman and every free man hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains.

"And said to the mountains and rocks: fall upon us and hide us from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb.

"For the great day of His wrath has come; and who shall be able to stand against it?"

The entire book began to glow, to radiate, to burn.

Near the book stood a typewriter of an antiquated model. On the door of the little room hung a big wide gray army coat.

A young man now entered the room and while slipping into his coat his eyes fell upon the open Bible, which seemed bathed in a sea of light.

"Even the Apocalypse gives no portent!" said the young man, shaking his head, and closed the book. Instantly it was extinguished, it grew silent, mute.

"These apocalyptical riders—they are only phantoms. The blood rose to the bridles of the horses—the prophet should see it with his own eyes—the horses sank and were swallowed up in blood!"

Just then a ray of the sun pierced him in the heart. He started back, his wild dark eyes turned towards the light and burned in his pale face.

He did not see the rubbish heap with the old paper and rusty nails nor the summer houses with the black rags on the roofs; he saw only the light eating its way through the somber edges of the clouds and proclaiming itself a victor over darkness.

His fingers touched the Holy Book, twitched.

*"I believe! I believe!"* he shouted out to the light.

## 2.

The old concierge, the veteran of '70, was again at his post. Now and again he stepped out of his lodge and expectorated. And there—would you believe it?—there he was again, that persistent little old man. He raised his stiff hat.

"Well, I never!—You! Here again!" was the porter's unfriendly greeting. And he continued reproachfully: "You got me into a nice fix, I must say!"

"Nice fix—? Good Lord—?"

"Yes, a nice fix, Herr—Herbst is the name, isn't it?"

"Yes, sir, Herbst!"

"There was evidently something wrong with your letter, Herr Herbst."

"Something wrong—?"

"Yes. His Excellency— You're certain you used good paper? At any rate, His Excellency—"

The porter, whose overcoat had grown very shabby in the course of the war, suddenly broke off, opened the glass door of the lodge and bowed. "Good morning, Colonel!" Swords rattled, breasts glistening with orders floated past the glass door, patent leather boots, red stripes, fur-lined coats. The privates and clerks whisked up the steps. And the work for the day began again, just as it had done every day for years.

"At all events, as I said, there was something wrong about your letter. His Excellency, to put it mildly—ahem!—was very angry!"

"But you encouraged me to—!"

"Politely and correctly composed. I only said, try it. Hand in a request for an audience. Did you write in a respectful tone?"

"Yes, very respectfully!"

"The envelope, I told you at once it would have been better to have used a white one. These grand gentlemen have their peculiarities. They are always on the lookout for trifles. For example, if there's the smallest speck of dirt— Good morning, Major! Good morning, Captain!— It went off surprisingly well, but it could easily have provoked a thunderstorm. I was prepared for a look, yes, you know, a look! And then this other thing happened last night—you know—that affair—"

"What affair?"

"Well, His Excellency's son—the young Lieutenant"—the porter's voice sank to a whisper—"had an accident with his revolver when he was packing. The revolver got jammed and went off by itself—shot in the hand."

"Is it possible?"

"Well, you can imagine what excitement there was in the house! The adjutant's already been here to give me

a tip. For you see, when His Excellency is in a bad humor, he's not to be joked with, His Excellency. As a usual thing His Excellency is quite approachable—even friendly. . . . But—" Suddenly the porter studied his visitor—"Look here—you're quite wet, thoroughly drenched."

"I came through the rain."

"Through the rain! And how you look! As if you'd not closed your eyes the entire night!"

"As I've already told you, I frequently have sleepless spells—"

The old porter with the white locks, the little medals of copper and lead on the breast of his coat, shook his head, critically, disapprovingly. Here in his lodge—

The ulster, that is to say, the man with the ulster, Herr Herbst, did indeed make a wretched appearance.

His russet-brown ulster, which was much too long and hung down to his dirty boots, was dark and crumpled from the wetting it had had. The stiff black hat, which sank down over his ears, was shining black from the rain, the binding on the edge was simply saturated with water. In reality, his face was not steel-blue, but yellowish, pallid, of an unhealthy coloring, with peculiar yellow spots, small, hollow-cheeked and seamed with deep furrows. When he opened the small wrinkled mouth with the grayish-white stubble mustache, yellow stumps of teeth were visible. His head was bald down to his neck: only a few sparse hairs, grayish-white and curly, indicated where the hair had once been; and those big prominent ears! His eyes were inflamed and moist, they swam the entire time in water. He was a person who seemed to attach no importance to his appearance, who neglected himself—evidently ill. His son . . . The old porter felt sorry for him, although it was extremely painful for him to have this drenched little man found in his lodge. If any one should come in, not a clerk, he had no fear of them, but, let us say, an officer!

"And tell me, dear sir, why are you here so early and

what is it you want?" he asked, suddenly displaying extreme astonishment.

"I wanted to—" Here Herr Herbst blushed and grew very nervous. "Well, then, I wanted to see if there was an answer?"

"Answer?"

"The General was to let you know when the audience—?"

The porter clasped his hands over his head in desperation. "And so you're going to drag me into it also—me?"

"It seemed to me to be the simplest—"

"Simplest—and now His Excellency will think that—!" And again the porter threw up his hands, fairly beside himself.

Herr Herbst felt only too clearly that his position was hopelessly lost. Hastily he put his little dirty hand into the pocket of the ragged ulster and brought forth a cigar case of aluminum, a large case of aluminum.

"Please," he stammered.

"Now you're commencing again with your cigars."

"Do take one, sir!"

"No, I'll not deprive you. In these times a cigar is a rarity. Thanks. And so—no address, you unlucky man—?"

"No. I wasn't quite sure—yes, what was I to do?—you see—I have—two addresses."

"You have two addresses?"

"Yes, two. I really don't know where I live."

"Two homes, and he doesn't know—now can you beat that?—you certainly are peculiar, sir—"

"It's all because of that—everything because of that—" stammered Herr Herbst apologetically.

Just then the door of an automobile slammed outside. It was five minutes before nine. The porter was startled and gave a quick glance at the clock.

"His Excellency! His Excellency!" he cried in the greatest excitement. "His Excellency mustn't see you here.

For God's sake, whatever you do, don't look through the door!"

And away rushed the porter to make his obeisance to the General.

The man in the ulster flew frightened into the corner of the lodge. His heart was beating with indescribable fear. He hugged the cigar case of aluminum to his breast. He stood with his face turned to the wall. But then some power which he could not resist forced him to turn his head slowly, quite slowly, and peer through the glass door.

Just then the General passed. Engrossed with his own thoughts, as usual, he passed up the stone steps.

"Thank God, His Excellency didn't see you!"

Breathing more freely the porter returned to his lodge. "And not at all in a bad humor. You can never tell what these grand gentlemen are going to do? He even said: 'Good morning, Heinecke'!"

The ulster again ventured out of the corner. His rheumy eyes looked questioningly into the old womanish face of the porter. "And—?"

"What do you mean by—'and'?"

"No news?"

The porter wrung his hands in desperation.

"And so you think, my good man, that His Excellency has nothing else to think about except your letter," he cried angrily. "You handed it in here at five yesterday afternoon, at eight you were here again! And scarcely has the day begun, along you come. . . . I ask you, my good man . . . !"

"Pardon me—"

"His Excellency's head is naturally filled with all sorts of matters. His Excellency has three hundred people under him, do you know what that means? Officers and clerks and privates—three hundred. There are orders to be given . . . and writing! Why, more than a hundred telegrams



come in every day, every second the Chief Army Command calls up—and so on and so on—and then you think! I must speak quite plainly with you. Were you ever a soldier?"

"No, sir!"

"Now, there you are! Then of course you can't understand how things are. Not a quiet moment. For forty years I have been doing this—"

"But haven't you, yourself—?"

"Of course I have, unfortunately—but just think what you ask! An audience! Hundreds waiting for weeks at a time! I must speak quite plainly with you. Yesterday you wrote and to-day you think— A General! Just think—and who are you? I don't wish to offend you—but *who* are you, I ask—or who am I—? It's very likely that the General will not answer at all!"

"Not at all—?" cried the man in the ulster, now thoroughly frightened.

"It's possible, why not? I'm speaking now quite plainly to you!"

"But my son—it's about—"

"It's possible—possible—you know nothing about the world, my friend, you don't know life. Probably from the country—"

Herr Herbst took his hat. Defeated, he turned to the door: "Well, then, I shall hand in a new request!" he said with decision.

"For God's sake!"

"And if he doesn't answer that—do you know what I shall do—?" Herr Herbst became lost in thought.

"Well, well—who would have thought it possible—?"

But evidently the ulster could find no solution of the question.

"At all events a new request—yes, yes—to-morrow! I can at least demand—a father has at least a right—a right—!"

The porter broke out into a senile laugh and was seized

with a fit of coughing. "A right! A right!" he fairly screamed.

"Why not, as a father?" asked Herr Herbst, again quite timid and discouraged.

"Ha-ha! That's a good one!"

The man with the ulster had vanished. By the time the porter had finished expectorating, not a trace of him was to be seen near or far.

### 3.

The General passed slowly along the endless corridor. He loved this corridor and he never walked through it without a feeling of peculiar satisfaction, although this corridor was just as ugly, bare, and evil-smelling as all other corridors in the huge official building. And yet in one respect it differed from all the others: it vibrated unceasingly from the heavy machinery pulsating in the basement. The desolate corridors seemed to be vitalized by this energy.

The orderlies and clerks were standing pressed against the wall just as they stood every day, every hour, upon the approach of the General. They did not turn their eyes from his stern countenance until he had passed. And even then they looked after him for some time. Gradually they came to life again, turning their heads into position by jerks. The officers who had the misfortune to be passing along the corridor stood still and made a respectful salute. And the General touched one finger to his cap, as he did daily, hourly, without looking at the men who fell back before him. His gaze was fastened on the floor, on the old stone flags which had been polished by the hobnail boots of the soldiers. He looked as if the entire weight of the war rested upon his shoulders.

Underneath the stone flags lay the printing offices. Day and night the presses spewed forth great heaps of maps, and these, smelling of glue and fresh paint, lay heaped up

in huge piles, until gradually all the corridors were deluged with them. As far as the eyes of the General could reach there were maps of every conceivable and inconceivable country, from the ice fields of the Arctic to the Equator.

Inspiration streamed from these heaps of cardboard. For example, at this very moment the General, without any conscious train of thought, saw distinctly before his eye the Peipus Lake and Germany's strategic line in the east, drawn some time ago by his old teacher, Moltke. By the way, a curious thing, the porter, the old veteran of '70, somewhat resembled Moltke as he grew older, only remotely, of course, in so far as any one, springing from the rank of the non-commissioned officers, could in any way bear a resemblance to a general. Yes, this line and in the north there must be a stronger Finland, firmly bound to Germany by an alliance; Russia must be driven to make peace, if need be, by placing a pistol at her breast.

It was lucky that this wretched diplomatic bungle at Brest-Litovsk was only a provisional thing . . .

Suddenly the strategic eastern line, running south from Peipus Lake, was interrupted by some object or other, as if it had been cut in two with a razor. What was it anyway? It had been cut in two by a broad, gray army coat.

There he was again, just look . . .

For weeks the General's eye had been caught by this overcoat, and, indeed, only because it had a curious way of fluttering, such as had no other coat he could remember. Although, by a curious coincidence, he had never caught more than a glimpse of this garment as it turned a corner, he could still establish the fact that it was the coat of an ordinary soldier, and was worn carelessly, in an unsoldierly fashion—in a word, contrary to all regulations. In certain moods he had even found something provocative in the fluttering of this coat—a certain symptom of the crumbling of the discipline at the front, against which he

fought in innumerable orders which were taken amiss in certain quarters.

But this time the coat ran directly into his arms, it could not escape.

The soldier came nearer, and now, as he slowed up, the General could see that he dragged one leg after him. The wide coat ceased to flutter and stood still against the wall, just as did every moving thing, when the General came in sight.

The General saw a common soldier about twenty-five years of age standing before him; of medium height, broad-shouldered, with unpretentious features which were strikingly old for his age. But what attracted the General especially about this face were the eyes. They were brown and extraordinarily mild. They were the mildest eyes that the General had ever seen in a man's face. And the fellow's whole appearance, pale and undernourished, like the majority of the orderlies and clerks to be seen about the building. Everything about him created a mild and conciliatory impression. Only his black hair was too long and stuck out from underneath his cap. The bearing of this man was absolutely beyond criticism. But despite that, there was something in the expression of his face—yes, how could it be described? In the warm brown eyes there shimmered—or did he deceive himself—an imperceptible smile despite the seriousness of his somewhat pallid face.

The General studied the face with great composure, just as if he had been studying a piece of wood-carving. The man was not in the least embarrassed, did not grow restless under the gaze, the expression of his eyes remained unchanged and his eyelids moved not an iota more rapidly. He remained standing, immobile and indifferent.

This man was not in the least disconcerted, that much was evident, to be standing in the presence of a superior, and he quietly returned the General's gaze—no fear, not the slightest.

Then!

The General had seen this face somewhere at some time, although he was convinced that he had never met the man before. It was such a face as one sees in the early paintings—a face from a vanished epoch, so to speak. In old paintings and engravings, of monks, poets, and other enthusiasts of that sort.

At last a faint flush became visible under the young man's pale skin.

As rapid as the strokes of a hammer fell questions and answers:

"What's your name?"

"Ackermann!"

"What are you?"

"Assistant clerk!"

"Civil profession?"

"Student!"

"Where wounded?"

"On the Somme!"

Suddenly the General's voice took on a sterner tone.

"Even if you are a student, you can at least button up your coat as the regulations require!"

The soldier's hand at once went to the buttons of his coat.

"Later, my son," said the General in a milder tone and passed on. He vanished behind the green padded doors.

Captain Weisbach was somewhat unsteady as he made his report. Otto's wounded hand had just been X-rayed. It was thought he would be fully recovered within a few weeks.

"Well, then, the physician has no fear that his career will be affected thereby?"

The General's figure seemed more than life-size to Weisbach who was looking at it through a sort of mist. He had the sensation of radiating clouds of alcohol. He had the

somewhat painful sensation that if any one should come near him with a lighted match—for God's sake, keep away!—he would go up in flames! Quite aside from the feeling that the parquet floor was ready to open under his feet at any moment and land him in the cellar with the presses, spewing out maps of all the lands of the earth day and night.

Barely half an hour earlier he had left Stroebel's. Stroebel's stag-parties—Saharet did not count—always lasted until morning. On the stroke of eight the last bank was closed. The guests then bathed, shaved themselves and breakfasted. Stroebel always served wonderful Mocha, white bread with butter!—everything in fact. To wind up with a cognac—and then up and away! Otto's accident had been telephoned in. Weisbach, in performance of his duties as an adjutant, had just taken the "necessary measures." Everything by telephone. He meant to go to the hospital the moment he found time. He knew what was demanded of him . . .

The General instructed him to connect him with Otto's commander at the front. And then: was any one waiting?

"The gentleman from the press!"

"Let him come in!" Weisbach was almost bowled over with astonishment.

This gentleman had been hanging around in the ante-room for the past week, until Weisbach scarcely dared announce him any more. The General had a contempt for everything connected with this profession—all these derailed students, scholars and authors who had the audacity to wish to create public opinion.

The high arched windows were reflected in the polished floor, the broad gold frame of the Kaiser's portrait on the wall fairly gleamed. Otherwise this office was bare and empty, occupied solely and alone by His Majesty with a marshal's baton and his breast glistening with orders, crosses, stars, gold braid and cords.

The long narrow curtains at the high arched windows

were of a deep, imposing blue, the walls were silver-gray; they had a way of opening when the General was working, disclosing vast distances, and at such times it seemed to him as if he were sitting in endless fog and mist.

The General fastened his gaze on the Kaiser's picture. Daily he exchanged looks with his superior officer. But this time the eyes of the soldier in the wide coat intercepted his gaze: strange eyes—really, just as they were in old paintings . . .

The gentleman from the press entered, bowing solemnly almost to the floor. A warm undertone in the General's voice encouraged him to come nearer.

The conversation was interrupted by Weisbach.

"The regiment," he announced. "Does the General wish the connection to be transferred to this room?"

"Permit me—I shall not disturb you?" The gentleman from the press appreciated this uncommon mark of confidence.

And thereupon the General began to scream into the receiver. "—already informed—yes, quite so—a farewell supper, Colonel, which lasted until six o'clock in the morning" and here the listening General bowed involuntarily to the telephone. The commander of the regiment expressed the wish that he should soon see his bravest officer. He said explicitly: his bravest officer. Here the General bowed again, and then he began shrieking into the telephone:

"Splendid morale, you say, magnificent morale—confidence—things will begin to move again shortly—" and again the General laughed into the telephone.

"You will pardon the interruption. My son has had an accident. When he was packing, getting ready to return to his regiment, his revolver got jammed and suddenly went off."

Extreme fright and profoundest sympathy were painted upon the reporter's face.

The escutcheon of the Hecht-Babenberg family had been

untarnished throughout the centuries. Just because of this escutcheon, the General was ready to protect his son with his own body. One would suppose that the tongues of irresponsible gossips would spare the name of Hecht-Babenberg; nevertheless Berlin was alive with envious and slanderous persons—he himself could tell a tale about this—to whom even the spotless crest of the Hecht-Babengs was not sacred . . .

Time was eaten up by work and already the noon hour had arrived. At the stroke of one the gray limousine tore away from the door and did not stop until it had reached Stifter's on Unter den Linden.

#### 4.

The General always ate his midday meal at Stifter's. Ruth was busy with her kitchen at the noon hour and to sit alone in his bare dining-room . . . No. It was even more depressing than in the evening, and still as death.

At least there were other people at Stifter's and noise—the noise that well-bred people are accustomed to make when they are dining, a quieting, comforting sort of noise. The silver tinkled.

Here, in his customary niche behind the palms, the General felt himself safe from the importunity of the world. Now and again some inquisitive head was thrust through the wall of palms, only to be quickly and respectfully withdrawn again.

Stifter's was not an ordinary restaurant, but rather a Temple of Food: colored glass windows, twilight, shaded lights and thick rugs. Eating here took the form of a religious cult. The waiters murmured solemnly, as if they were priests listening to a confession.

A tacit understanding existed between the establishment and the guests: the establishment promised to see that its guests came sound and well-nourished through the war, for which the guests on their part obligated themselves to pay



and hold their tongues. Practically every one who went to Stifter's was a regular customer. Mostly high dignitaries who endeavored thus to accumulate new energy for their strenuous duties, and Junkers, who came to Berlin from their large country estates and knew of the cuisine. At times suspicious persons also wandered into Stifter's, but immediately the head waiter—"Extremely sorry but everything taken, the regular guests . . ."

The head waiter's voice droned like an organ. He approached the red ear of the General more closely than any other ordinary mortal would have dared to do.

"Consommé with marrow or meat balls, Your Excellency? With the meat balls, quite so!

"Chicken patties, Your Excellency? This is meatless day, but—only for our regular guests, of course—Chateaubriand— We have also received some caviar. You'll permit me to serve you a portion without mentioning the price?"

The General adjusted his gold-rimmed pince-nez and looked fixedly at the man in evening dress. "You said—?"

"Yes, by way of Finland. The Russian peace is already beginning to show its effects. Has Your Excellency, by the way, seen the flag flying on the Russian Embassy? No? Hoisted for the first time to-day. Some pudding or Camembert?"

"Camembert!"

"Quite so, Your Excellency . . . I have already placed the wine in the cooler. Quite so."

The General was in the habit of drinking a half bottle of champagne every day for dinner. At times he only sipped at it; this depended entirely upon the way he felt.

The meat balls that melted on the tongue, the chicken patties with minced mushrooms and spicy herbs, the Chateaubriand in English fashion, the caviar—nothing short of an event, one might say, after all these years of deprivation. . . . He felt his nerves strengthened; Otto's unfortu-

nate affair, all the petty annoyances of his work, vanished. Nothing remained, nothing at all, it was a delightful state of floating about in nothing. Only his vis-à-vis disturbed the complete harmony. Perhaps he would change his seat?

Opposite him sat two cavalry captains. With their close shaven skulls, full of protuberances and humps, bloated faces, the rosy rolls of fat at the backs of their necks, they were the typical "base-hogs," who had never heard the whistling of a bullet. Now there was nothing the General detested more than such men. Moreover they wore long rows of decorations on their breasts. They even had impudence enough to wear the Crescent, an order which the General himself did not possess—although they had never seen Turkey. They were always whispering and giggling—always filling their glasses—and gold bracelets were visible on their hairy wrists. They treated the General most respectfully, but not exaggeratedly so as they belonged to the same social class. The General despised them from the bottom of his soul.

But the waiter was standing before him with a lighted candle: "A cigar, Your Excellency?"

Thank God, the two fellows had gone at last.

The General lay back comfortably in his easy chair.

"But what about the cavalry?" asked a skeptical voice in his ear. Day and night his brain was busy with the problems of the war. "Are the horses adequate for the exertions of a big offensive?"

"The horses are rested—well-equipped and well-fed," answered a second, more confident, voice.

Again everything was quiet, again that wonderful floating in nothing. The General was enveloped in the smoke of his havana.

That evening he was going to sup with Dora. It was Friday. Tuesdays and Fridays the General was in the habit of taking supper with Frau von Doenhoff, as has already been mentioned.

But suddenly the General's eyes were lit up by a thought. They widened and shone brightly out of the semi-darkness of the Temple. Cold, wide-awake and thoughtful. He was now entirely absorbed by this one thought.

"Where had Ruth been?" he asked, and his eyes grew wider and wider.

Then he half closed them; only a crack was visible, a crack of sparkling ice.

And that unintelligible remark in the letter of the little man with the blue frozen face . . . ?

Did it not suddenly assume a strange significance?

"What's that? What?" cried the General, as he stepped out of Stifter's. He tottered.

"What?"

"Is it possible?"

"Have the people really gone mad?"

And in fact he distinctly felt the earth giving way under his feet.

"Could any one conceive such a thing to be possible? In Berlin?"

"Unter den Linden!"

A rapid flush rose to his face.

From the roof of the house opposite floated a flaming blood-red flag, blowing to and fro in the wind as if it were the most natural thing in the world. Up there!

Every one was gazing at it. Just imagine such a thing! A red flag in a city where even a red necktie is a dangerous challenge, where the color red, appearing alone, is simply taboo, where the swords of the policemen would automatically hack into small bits any one daring to display a red handkerchief, even if he were only blowing his nose. And here—without any warning—just as if it were the most natural thing in the world—a red flag, a flaming red standard, hoisted on a regulation flagstaff on the roof of a house! The passersby craned their necks, were petrified

with astonishment, couldn't trust their eyes, winked and blinked . . .

The red flag gleamed and heralded the victory of the Russian people over the men of the gallows, the cat-o'-nine-tails and the lead mines—it gleamed and glistened over the endless sea of Berlin's houses.

"Have they entirely lost their minds over there?" The General referred to the Wilhelmstrasse.

And he sank into the most somber reflections as the car shot down the Linden.

This flag, saturated with the blood of crowned heads and high dignitaries . . .

Shameful.

At times it seemed to him as if he heard a crackling, a shattering . . .

## 5.

"I believe!"

"I believe in mankind!"

"I believe in the goodness of man and in his purity! I believe in his sacred destiny and his divine soul! I believe in the brotherhood and the comradeship of man and in the redeeming love of humanity! This is my creed, great God out there beyond the Darkness!"

Ackermann, the soldier, shouted out this creed with all the fervor of his twenty-five years. The well-known gray limousine had just dashed by him.

"I believe—" The bell of a street car jingled, and with a bound he sprang to one side. By a hair he had just escaped being run over. His wide gray coat fluttered towards the Brandenburg Gate. He walked as usual with long, quick steps. He gesticulated violently and his wild dark eyes glowed in the pallid lean face.

"I believe in the brotherhood of the nations who to-day are tearing each other to pieces! I believe in the day when guns and battleships will be destroyed, boundary posts re-

moved and flags torn to pieces! I believe in the day when men will speak only one language, it doesn't matter which, for language is unessential, it is only the thoughts therewith expressed!

"I believe in the day when man will no longer exploit man, in the day when there will no longer be white, black nor yellow races, neither white nor yellow slaves; in the day of equal rights for equal duties! Yes, I, Ackermann, believe in all this! I believe in the victory of right over wrong, of truth over lies! I believe that divine ideas move the world and not guns!

"Yes, I, most miserable of men, I believe in the coming kingdom of God on earth—the kingdom of reason, justice, dignity and beauty!

"I believe also in you, my people!" cried Ackermann, his eyes wild and glowing as he passed through the Brandenburg Gate. It is well, he thought, breathing more freely, once in a while to repeat one's creed. In this terrifying darkness it makes one feel safer.

At this moment he came to a sudden halt. Something unusual, unexpected, a miracle! Fire ran through his body, his face glowed, his hands were burning. The heavens dazzled, the heavens were jubilant. The sky above Berlin was a flaming red.

Already . . . ? Already . . . ? Promise . . .

He stood still, pushed his cap back over his dark hair and he was so excited that he pointed to the red flag, floating from the roof. His lips trembled. Motionless he stood there, a fanatical fervor in his eyes.

Then he took off his cap.

"—Light from the east—dawn of a new day—"

## 6.

While the General was dining at Stifter's, the ulster, the little Herr Herbst, was consuming his potato soup in

the soup kitchen in the Dorotheenstrasse. He often went there for quite specific reasons.

"And so he didn't?" he whispered to himself visibly excited. "And I waited specially at the door of the restaurant and saluted, but he didn't see me. He would certainly have remembered if he had seen me. Well, perhaps—if even this porter thinks—an old man, what does he know about it?"

Herr Herbst sat in his moist steaming coat, his stiff hat on his head, near a window looking out on the gloomy courtyard. The same dead fly was still lying on the window ledge—how long had it lain there? Again the automobile with the rolls of paper was standing in the court. This courtyard belonged to the well-known building in the Dorotheenstrasse where the list of losses was displayed. Every day the car drove up with gigantic rolls of newly printed lists, every day for three and a half years—they fell out there like the leaves from the trees in autumn.

Like the leaves—nothing else—so thought Herr Herbst angrily.

He also—his son—Robert—had fallen—well—like a leaf—that simply falls, without any one noticing it . . .

He nodded his head.

"Like a leaf. . . ."

His face became distorted in a grimace, while he groaned.

"And no one noticed it!"

"Ah, ah, ah!"

Suddenly the old man cried aloud, a small despairing scream. The guests at the adjoining table turned to look at him.

Again he was quite still—he must make no disturbance—and ate his soup. Like a wounded animal, pain had suddenly seized hold of him.

The kitchen was in full blast at this hour.

It smelled of cabbage as did all these kitchens. Without cabbage and turnips all of them would have had to close down immediately.

But the ulster found this one quite elegant in comparison to the ones in south and east Berlin. Here, for example, you had a knife and fork, even if they were only of lead, without paying a deposit, whereas in those kitchens you were obliged to deposit a mark. People had become thieves, nothing but thieves, they stole everything they could lay their hands on. At least respectable people came to this kitchen.

Young business men and clerks, little waxen stenographers, gloomy, harassed-looking officials, pale, spectacled students with portfolios and books under their arms, a few uniforms. They stood around the bare wooden tables and waited patiently until their turn came. The door opened and closed unceasingly, letting in currents of moisture and cold.

Pale, yellowish, with waxen ears, bent shoulders, coughing, mournful eyes, feverish—all of them bore the signs. Grippe would lay them low, to-day, to-morrow, in a year—it didn't matter when, they could no longer escape. Boards lay already sawn and measured for them on the heaps of some lumberyard. But they still laughed, the little waxen stenographers, and giggled. Would any one believe it possible—while the boards were already being nailed together? They grew excited, they debated, the blood flew into their pale faces.

"Have you read—have you heard—now they say that we are making fats out of their corpses."

"Fats—what do you say? Who—? Fats?"

"The Entente—who did you suppose?"

"Those scoundrels, those—!"

"Ah, ah—but that's really—!"

"Isn't that worse than murder? Are we criminals, scum of the earth? Can one—I can't bear it any longer, I am trembling in every muscle—the Grippe. How can men sink so low?"

"Grippe has also got hold of me. You shouldn't get so

excited, especially when you're eating. And the Government?"

"The Government? It sleeps. It reads no newspapers, doesn't even know it yet. It permits the people to be insulted, while it sleeps. Understands nothing, has misgivings, incompetent, to the last degree!"

Cabbage and turnips, turnips and cabbage every day. Frozen and half-rotten potatoes, at times a few dried peas, very rarely a little piece of meat, very little—mostly bones. The bones were collected and turned over to these kitchens. But at all events it was better here than at Alexander Platz where the food smelled sour and disagreeable, enough to turn your stomach.

Shyly and cautiously the ulster turned his head, and there, there she stood—his favorite!

Herself delicate, herself pale, patient, always smiling, always somewhat distraught, at times she even stuck her finger in her mouth. There she stood in the midst of this confusion and the clouds of steam coming from the cabbage, she, *his* daughter, the daughter of the General. She was standing at the pantry window, controlling the endless rows of steaming plates, pushed out by red hands. At times she went up to one of the tables, chatted a little, conciliated.

So dainty, so fine, her eyes shimmered—these little hands—would any one believe it possible, in the midst of this heavy odor of cabbage, this noise—a highborn lady, the daughter of a high officer? She had also been at the front—the ulster knew everything—she had gone as a nurse. She, this delicate flower, had heard the frightful roar of the guns about which Robert always wrote. Only in her bearing, when she turned her head quickly, did she bear any resemblance to the General—otherwise none at all, not the slightest!

Surreptitiously the ulster looked over at her, and suddenly he blushed like a lover.

His heart was orphaned, lonely, he had come to Berlin



from the provinces—knew no one in the city; he also drank. The truth was: he loved the General's daughter! Quite against his will, for really he should have hated her! He only came here to see his darling, as he called Ruth. The sight of her warmed his heart. It was she herself who had brought him here, into this kitchen. It was in this way that he had discovered this kitchen.

But now Ruth drew nearer, and he turned his head away quickly and looked out into the courtyard, where soldiers were unloading the rolls of paper.

The old man with the horn spectacles was again dissatisfied! Almost every day he found fault with something.

"We do everything in our power," Ruth endeavored to appease him.

But the old man with the horn spectacles cried excitedly: "I pay, don't I, my money is as good as anybody's else? And where's the meat, Miss—?" In desperation he stirred about between the cabbage leaves with his fork. "I gave a meat coupon for twenty-five grams of meat, Miss—and where's the meat, I ask you? Where? Where's my meat—I have a right to it. Where's my meat—my meat—my meat?"

"I'll go and see," answered Ruth and carried the old man's plate back to the kitchen.

The ulster breathed more freely.

But just then the wide gray army coat appeared in the doorway—and instantly the ulster put his hat on straight and left the kitchen.

## 7.

Yes, the General's daughter herself had introduced him to this kitchen—it was very simple—although he had never spoken a word to her. . . .

Down the Friedrichstrasse sailed the ulster with the stiff hat. He looked as if he were swimming in an upright

position, as impossible as such a thing is. He tripped and stumbled, his knees somewhat bent, the left shoulder a trifle lower than the right. He had been on his feet since yesterday morning, with the exception of a little nap he had taken on a bench in the Tiergarten, in the rain—but now he no longer felt his legs and feet.

Without the slightest effort he floated onwards, he seemed to be propelled automatically. He rolled along on a little cloud, not larger than a well-filled potato sack. At times he seemed to feel it under his feet as if it were dough. He was also able to steer his little cloud at will, to the left, to the right, without the slightest effort.

Yes, she herself—his daughter, the gracious Miss.

He had stood in front of a cigar shop in the midst of a line of greedy smokers, who were waiting for the shop to open, with the price of the cigars rising while they waited. That's the truth! There he stood and spoke to a soldier, a chauffeur. This chauffeur was not familiar with the Hill of Quatre Vents, he knew nothing about Robert's battalion, but he did know the General's chauffeur, Schwerdtfeger by name, and the General had been commanded to Berlin four weeks ago! What? Here? What a coincidence! How many hundreds of soldiers had he spoken to and now God led this chauffeur across his path!

He was here? Here! Sleepless the nights, restless the days.

Yes! This face . . . !

This silent face that never spoke, these eyes which one never saw!—This walk—and the porter's deep reverence! without any doubt: it was he! Robert had written such a detailed account from the front: "We marched by and our General stood on the steps of his château and saluted. He and no other! As if hewn out of granite . . ." wrote Robert. Yes, that was the man whom the soldiers—no, perhaps it would be better not to use the word—mentioned! Such was the appearance of those born to command: "The way to

the top of the Hill lies over our dead bodies." This letter of Robert's rustled in his pocket.

For days this stony face pursued him through the labyrinth of streets.

Strange face of stone. It fascinated!

Every noon the big gray car shot off in the same direction—two days later the ulster was standing in front of Stifter's. And suddenly he bowed, and the General raised his hand to his cap. Why? Why had he greeted him? A second before he had not dreamed of such a thing as greeting the General—of daring to greet the General. It was no doubt presumptuous, impolite. Three days later—he had nothing to do, nothing at all—Herr Herbst, gentleman of leisure—three days later he knew where the General lived.

He was quite familiar with this house—he knew every window and the smallest crack in the walls. In his dreams this house seemed to him to be a face hewn out of gray stone. He knew also the ivy-colored red brick villa with the door-plate: Doenhoff. He knew the zebra-striped blouse of Petersen—all of them nice people, loquacious . . .

The ulster rolled along on its little cloud across the Belle Alliance Platz, beneath the tracks of the elevated and on into the Blücherstrasse.

Here it passed and repassed a narrow yellow house, and looked up to the third story where the blinds were closely drawn. This house, this particular story, seemed to possess an uncommon interest for him—to fascinate, to repel . . .

His shoulders were contracted, he ached, suddenly he felt a dead weight dragging him down, the burden which he carried around with him through the endless stony streets of Berlin.

Then he turned with decision and rolled away again down the Blücherstrasse.

All of a sudden the cloud stood still and could not be budged from the spot. In the twinkling of an eye—there

he was on the inside. A little glass, another and yet a third! Again he was out in the street.

Every day he saw a young woman come from the General's house, with the brass plate on the door which was constantly being scrubbed and polished by the two servants. To-day, to-morrow, every day. Just see!

Let me offer you a cigar, sir. A little cigar—always busy, a lovely winter day . . .

In this way he made the acquaintance of Jacob and Wangel. He often talked with Jacob. In addition to Ruth there was also a son, Otto, a first lieutenant, at the front, and the General's wife—dead, dead, dead, years ago.

Every day the gracious Miss went to the Dorotheenstrasse and vanished in an archway. Finally he ventured to follow her. In this way he had discovered the kitchen.

He could now see his daughter, the General's daughter, daily! There she stood, quite near him—flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood. Hate boiled, he was eaten up by the lust for revenge. . . .

He resolved to insult her! Before all the guests! Perhaps he would throw a plate at her feet, but in such a way—you understand—that it would break into a thousand pieces. But why? Yes, inexplicable . . . she had done nothing to him.

For days he brooded over his plan. Perhaps he would spill a plate of cabbage soup over her apron? A splendid idea! He had just reached this point when it seemed to happen without his volition.

The ulster stood still to get his second wind. Should he or should he not cross the street and enter that saloon?

Without his volition. One day quite unexpectedly, it so happened that she stood quite near him talking to some one. And now came the humiliating part . . .

Even now the sweat stood on his brow when he thought of this humiliation, although two months had passed since then.

Not a plate of cabbage soup, no, merely a spoonful—he took it and let it run down over Ruth’s apron. But in a trice, God Almighty! a firm hand seized him by the arm and a voice shouted until every one in the kitchen heard it: “How dare you—?”

“My—my—my hand trembled—”

“That’s not so, I distinctly saw you do it on purpose!”

The soldier in the wide coat shouted again: “You’re a nice fellow. To pour a spoonful of soup over a lady’s apron—”

Then Ruth turned to him. She looked at her apron, took out her handkerchief and laughed—laughed in a friendly way at him.

“Perhaps some one jostled his arm. It’s really not so bad.”

“I was trembling, my hand trembled—”

“Nothing so very dreadful has happened!”

Humiliating, humiliating! Tears stood in his eyes. How on earth did he happen to pour a spoonful of soup over her apron? He was drinking so heavily those days that he finally fell down the steps and struck his head, but it served him quite right.

Since this incident he had looked at the General’s daughter with wholly different eyes. His heart began to beat as soon as he set eyes upon her.

He loved her. Strange!

The mind of the little old man was filled with this thought as he hastened through the labyrinth of streets. He crossed crowded squares, plunged into the whirlpool of humanity which seemed to gush from the earth—and suddenly it looked as if he meant to turn around and retrace the entire route he had just traveled. What? Should he go to the Lessing Allée this evening? No, go home, without any argument, do you understand?

## 8.

"Lieutenant von Hecht-Babenberg?"

"Third station, lady, along this hall and then turn to the left. Room 233."

It was only necessary to put a polite question and even here in Berlin one could be sure of receiving a polite answer. Hedi was proud of her tact in handling people. Even now, when she flew into a rage if any looked at her, she got along splendidly with them. To be sure the porter saw at a glance that it was a lady he had before him. She naturally wished to make a good impression when she went to see Otto, and so had worn her best hat, a raspberry-colored one, the beaver collar that she had from her mother and light silk stockings.

Three white roses peeped out from their tissue paper covering.

The house smelled of carbolic acid, but Hedi loved the odor. Everything was spick and span and really far less terrible than she had supposed it would be. She had no fondness for places of this kind; cemeteries, crematoriums, hospitals, always made her shudder. Only once in a while she visited mamma's grave, but that was all so long ago.

Now she met more people in the broad corridor and proceeded somewhat more timidly.

A soldier whose right foot had been amputated hobbled by, showing the bare stump.

Soldiers in light-colored hospital clothes sat on a bench with bandaged arms, legs and heads. They watched her coming with curious eyes, took her in from tip to toe, and she felt terribly uncomfortable as if the glances of all the wounded men penetrated through to her very skin. Suddenly the door of a room was opened, and Hedi was incautious enough to look in. In this room a soldier was bound to a wooden table having his leg amputated up to the knee. The naked shank—to Hedi's horror—did not end

with a foot, but with a sort of horse's hoof, a red shred below the knee. The physician was just dabbing the red horse's hoof with a piece of cotton. At that moment the wounded man turned his eyes to the door, eyes full of intense anguish. The door was closed again. Hedi came near fainting. Behind the door of one of the operating rooms a man was groaning while the rough voice of the physician bade him be quiet. At the intersection of two corridors she came upon a stretcher borne by two soldiers. On it lay a soldier covered with a sheet, whose face was concealed up to the nose. His glazed eyes were turned up to the ceiling and he did not look at her.

Hedi had grown purplish-red. What madness to have come here in a raspberry-colored hat and light silk stockings? Should she turn and flee?

Just then she started!

A wild shriek as if some one were being cut to pieces alive.

My God, what indescribable misery these men had to endure! Who had any idea of it? The shriek hastened her footsteps. Then a door slammed and the cry seemed to be just at her elbow. A shrieking soldier, holding high his bandaged right arm, rushed across the corridor followed by a number of physicians and nurses. The man ran down the corridor like some one possessed. In the doorway appeared the livid spectacled face of a physician in a white coat who laughed out loud.

The shrieking grew more distant.

Hedi's eye wandered. Her skin was as hot as if it were strewn with hot sand. Horror breathed from these white-washed walls. This hospital was an endless labyrinth hewn out of gray and blue ice. The twilight came through the windows at the further end of the corridor, shadows hobbled by, limped through the distant cross corridors. A labyrinth of thousands of chambers filled with misery and pain. Day and night the surgeon's knife cut into human flesh, un-

ceasingly the pails were filled with blood and pus. The entire house was like a huge wound, a ravine of festering flesh in which the physicians climbed about with their knives.

Just then an officer of high rank and dignified bearing turned into the main corridor. His massive figure with its sloping shoulders walked through the corridor like an apparition from another world. From the contour of the figure Hedi recognized the General. Two cripples on crutches stood at attention as well as they could, one in his stocking feet, the other with one leg missing. They stood against the wall on their crutches with their chins held high. Another with his leg heavily bandaged was sitting on a chair. He remained seated, the upper part of his body rigid, holding his two crutches stretched out in front of him as if he were presenting arms.

The General passed without looking at Hedi. However, she had only met him once at Dora's and he could scarcely be expected to recognize her.

A nurse, a tactless person, told Hedi with a malicious smile that Otto could receive no more visitors to-day. She had sent her card to his room so that he knew perfectly well that it was she. She distinctly heard his bright clear voice in the room. Of course she had only come to show her sympathy for his accident—for no other reason. He should see that she was above certain things. But this tactless person took in Hedi's raspberry-colored hat—yes, she even took the liberty of letting her glance travel down as far as the light silk stockings. Hedi cast a critical glance at the somewhat untidy coiffure of the little red-haired nurse.

These two were on a war footing at once.

"His general health is good?" asked Hedi with a pleasant smile.

"One can never tell whether or not complications may set in," answered the sister, scrupulously polite.



"Yes, that's very true!" Hedi smiled mockingly and took her departure with complete amiability.

But she took the roses away with her.

"Hotel Kaiserhof!" she called to the cabman. For Hedi had been extravagant enough to take a cab. There were certain quarters of Berlin in which she felt uneasy.

With a sudden gesture of rage she threw the roses out of the cab window into the muddy streets. Twenty marks for three flowers! What madness!

She was sure that Otto had placed an entirely false interpretation upon her visit. Of course it was impossible for him to believe in the pure and disinterested motives of any person. But now, Otto, farewell! As far as she was concerned—well, he and this red-haired person . . .

The violinist tucked a violet silk kerchief under his chin, saluted the public with a coquettish smile, then swung his bow in the air so that his dazzling white cuff slipped out of his sleeve: *Carmen*.

"Would you like some cake also?"

"Yes, cake, if you please!"

So there she sat again, Hedi. First, she thought, first, secondly, thirdly—one should always think things over carefully. It was indeed the climax; things could not go on like this much longer.

In the first place, then, it was a fact that she was in a state of financial embarrassment. Secondly, she was bored to death at home, and thirdly, something must happen soon. She had no intention of mourning away her entire youth, just because this war was never coming to an end.

But not so fast; let us consider the first point. This small amount of pocket money which papa handed her the first of every month with a beaming face—ridiculous. How could papa think—the truth was, he simply didn't understand. Nothing else remained to be done but to get money in some way! Just now it was lying about in the streets, so people

said; millions were flying through the air. Should she go into the movies? Droll idea, but unfortunately impracticable. One must have—how splendid this music was, full of courage!—one must have connections. And society?—No. Moreover, she didn't give a rap for society!

At any rate the waiter came with the tea and for a time Hedi's attention was absorbed. Again the flaxen blonde with the diamond earrings was there, and the dark, tragic one with the light-brown shoes. And the old gentleman with the mustache and the bald head was also having his tea here again. In order to divert herself, Hedi suddenly closed one eye and winked at him unexpectedly over her teacup. The gentleman with the bald head bounced back in his chair—but already Hedi had taken out her batiste handkerchief and was rubbing her eye as if something had flown into it. No, how ridiculous these old men are!

Yes, money must be obtained in some way. She owned, for example, only three pairs of silk stockings to her name. The meshes had already begun to run, although she was careful to wear the stockings only on special occasions. But after these stockings were worn out? The gloves, the shoes, and when it became necessary, a new gown? And already she felt that she was being pushed out of the class of the well-dressed—the ladies! Already—things moved quickly—society did not tolerate worn buttonholes and patched pumps. And she would become second-class!—unbearable thought! As incredible as it sounded, her whole life hung upon a pair of silk stockings.

The thought of this plunge into the depths was utterly terrifying. She grew frightened, she grew actually dizzy. It was indeed the time to look facts in the face.

Soon she would be compelled, for example—only to mention one example—to buy a cake of soap in a contraband way—this was being done every day!

Life at home had grown unbearable. Papa, dear and kind, but always tired, overworked, always busy. And

moreover he knew absolutely nothing, although he was employed at the Foreign Office! It frequently happened that she made a remark at the table, something about politics, and papa shook his head at her reproachfully. "One doesn't say such things, my child." "But, papa, I read it in the paper three days ago!" "Ah, indeed, three days ago?" That was papa's way. Clara was a mere child. One minute she danced like a crazy person, and in the next she wept. As yet she knew nothing of life. She had not reached the age when every day there was a new problem, a frightful struggle, when one's living body burned every day—when one waited, waited—when waiting was inexpressible misery. Oh, terrible! Terrible!

The days went by, drab and monotonous. They lived in an extremely modest manner. And moreover, papa had forbidden her to do anything, even in the slightest way, to evade the food laws. How they did live, what they did eat—despite the food she managed to smuggle to the table!—It was a sin and a shame, and if any one knew it, they would be forever disgraced. For instance turnips, such as the cows eat, frozen potatoes . . .

Drab, cold, dark, the days passed by.

Light, brilliancy, warmth, gayety, dances, fêtes, which formerly accompanied a young girl into life—where were they? Before the war she had been to only two balls, and of these she still dreamed.

What was this music in comparison to the music at those balls? A faint echo. This illumination—a reflection. The laughter of people to-day, their faces—shadows in a world of shadows, nothing more, nothing more. . . .

But suddenly Hedi bent her blushing face over her teacup: there he stood. The Spaniard had entered the room! He knew that she would come again, that he, in fact, if he wished to see her again—they had understood each other perfectly.

Wearing the same bright yellow coat, he stood in the

center aisle polishing his monocle. He had seen her immediately and was now laying his plans. Would he have the courage to speak to her? She had already been dreaming dreams as she rode along in the cab—tea with him either at the Adlon or the Bristol—an evening at the theater, possibly in a box—a dinner where one could chat. . . .

He came over to her. . . .

Hedi had entirely overcome her embarrassment and calmly watched him as he advanced. She had herself thoroughly in hand. Stroebel came straight towards her, his eyebrows raised in joyful recognition. But the nearer he came, the uglier he grew. His yellow overcoat was somewhat too large for him, too conspicuous. His entire apparel displayed an exaggerated elegance. Ah, and not the slightest sign of a Spaniard—he was a—bulldog. His blue-shaven cheeks were somewhat wrinkled, sallow and dissipated, nothing remained of the Spaniard but the shining black hair, pasted down just a trifle too much on his head, just a little too much pomade—in short, not quite first-class.

But he had the nonchalance, the bearing of a man of the world.

With unparalleled nonchalance he made his bow. "Our mutual friend has had an accident—" he began, quite easily. Nor did he lose his nonchalance even when Hedi looked at him without displaying a vestige of understanding. Without a vestige of understanding, although she had just been planning to go with him to the theater, to dine with him, to chat with him over a bottle of champagne—for example.

"You've made a mistake, sir," answered Hedi with an amiable, indulgent smile, such a smile as only a woman of the world could bring to her lips.

Was it not nerve in the highest degree for him simply to pounce upon her this way in the Kaiserhof?

"You were sitting here yesterday—?"

"I don't remember." Hedi's voice withdrew to some remote region. Remote and unreal was her smile.

"It's to be hoped that Herr von Hecht—"

Hedi's eyes suddenly grew chilly, all life seemed to freeze in her veins.

With an impeccable bow, wholly at his ease, Stroebe! withdrew, absolutely master of the situation.

The violinist in his black coat swayed his hips and cast coquettish glances over at the dark, tragic lady who had had the misfortune to overturn a glass of water.

Hedi forced a dreamy innocent expression to her countenance. No one should notice that a perfectly strange man had dared to accost her. The flaxen blonde with the diamonds in her ears had been a close observer of the little scene. Hedi barely glanced at her, and a whole world of contempt lay in the imperceptible uplifting of her eyebrows with which she looked over her head.

No, no, she was by no means as far as that—yet! What was he thinking of . . . ?

## 9.

With hesitating steps little Herr Herbst turned the drafty corner into his street, the Ackerstrasse—far, far out.

An awkward iron bridge spanned the distance between the houses, and just at that moment a freight train rumbled thunderingly by. The smoke sank down to join the mud of the streets.

It could not be helped, he must pass under the bridge, even though it should collapse on his head. The fear of the drunkard contracted his breast.

Out here the city created a somber and neglected impression. The streets were as straight as a die; everywhere the same gray tenement houses, the same signs, the same crowds of pale ragged children. The same hollow-cheeked women, wrapped in shawls, who, carrying either

a jug or a basket, crawled along the fronts of the houses, coughing. The same spindling black trees which suffocated in the acid air. The stucco had fallen from the walls of the houses, the gutters were filled with dirty pieces of paper.

In front of the shop where the weekly ration of fat, twenty grams, was dispensed, stood long queues of half-frozen women, stamping their cold feet while they chattered and cursed.

Otherwise the shops and booths were all empty, yawning coffins. Bread-shops without bread, meat-shops without meat, shoe-shops with wooden shoes and tin cans of shoe polish. In this quarter of the city were also to be found the collecting stations for old metal—lamp pedestals, picture frames, ash trays, all sorts of rubbish, taken from even the poorest homes for war purposes.

Here also was the delicatessen shop of Alfred Schustermann displaying the sign: "People, just take a look at these wares!" Seashells, wagon loads of them, made into jelly, aspic, patties, sausages. The professors who had discovered that tree-bark was nourishing and that mushrooms could be grown in the gutters, declared that these shells rivaled even beef in nutritive values.

But nearer and nearer drew the dingy tenement house with the gigantic sign: Pawnshop!

The old man's steps grew slower and slower, his rheumy inflamed eyes blinked under the rim of his stiff hat. His courage had almost oozed out.

He stopped to take breath in front of the "Zoölogical Shop." Yes, there he was, his little friend, the siskin, who had solved the problem of grinding out ninety-five per cent of the seeds. The others, the little green parrot, the two canary birds, and the thrushes, had not been so successful and had died one after the other. Yes, died. The little white mice, also, who ran around in an endless circle, had suddenly developed shortness of breath in their droll race. The fourth winter of the war had also been the death of

them. Only the siskin still hopped cheerfully around in his little cage.

Between the "Zoölogical Shop" and the pawnbroker's, three tread-worn steps led up to the "Lion of Antwerp" and in a trice the ulster was sitting in the bar.

No reproaches—he was summoning up courage for the night. For the night would come as certain as anything! And with it the terrible ghosts, his tormentors, against whom the only protection was a deep, deep sleep. Intoxication, to speak frankly, a conscious drunkenness.

Yes, here he was at home, it was plainly to be seen from the grimaces with which he was received by mine host, a humpback. The soldiers who frequented this bar called this host the "Millionaire." Yes, ho—ho, such a hump had its value to-day, without a doubt! On Sundays the place was filled with girls from the munition factories and then things were lively. They drank—would any one believe it?—they drank gin like the men—ah, and they wore short silk skirts. And if they now and then chaffed one, it didn't matter. They laughed and had no cares. Perhaps they would fly into the air to-morrow; for that reason they laughed and were so boisterous.

Finally—it had already grown dark outside—the ulster crawled up the stairs of the tenement house. The little cloud upon which he had been rolling along so comfortably had disappeared long ago. His legs trembled with weariness.

Softly, softly he unlocked the door. He did not like to have any one observe his comings and goings. Three sets of tenants lived here, each had one room, and they shared the kitchen. But he had never set foot in the kitchen. Now he was in his little dark room and had taken off his shoes. Suddenly he trembled. Ah, if he only did not dream again of that swing! Anything else, only not that! He had dreamed recently that he was sitting in a swing that flew to and fro through the black night. Clinging like a monkey,

he sat on the narrow slippery board, screaming with fear—but the swing flew back and forth like a pendulum in perpetual motion, each movement an eternity; relentlessly it flew back and forth at a furious tempo.

Quick, quick before they seized him. . . .

Then he fell asleep. A faint whimpering came from his mouth with its little circular opening. He had kept on his ulster.

There! He sat upright in bed. His thin hair stood on end, his brow was bathed in sweat. He fairly steamed with alternating heat and cold. His overcoat was still damp from last night's rain.

Had not some one called him, poured fearful words into his ear, like rocks? And a crash, as if the entire house had split in two, had he not distinctly heard this? The beams shivered. Quite distinctly!

The frightful crash was still ringing in his ears, and it was some time before he was recalled to reality. He had lived between an unknown, undivined world and reality—since those things had happened. . . . Often, for days at a time, he lived under the spell of the unknown, the incomprehensible, often he was seized by this spell in bright daylight—but then again he had clear days, as he called them. Then everything was as it had been formerly, and the other seemed still more incomprehensible and fearsome.

Darkness, and now he began to hear the noises, noises of this world, thank God!

A typewriter rattled on the other side of the wall opposite the narrow bed. The student Ackermann, at the moment soldier, was working there. He wrote for the newspapers in order to earn money—he also wrote quite other things. Herr Herbst knew quite well what they were, oh, oh! he knew far more than that man in there suspected.

On the other side of the wall, quite near his bed, a step could be heard walking up and down, like an animal rest-



lessly pacing to and fro in his cage. This was Haehnlein, the wall-paperer, at present a soldier. He lived in the adjoining room with his sick wife and their two children. She had given birth to another child not very long ago, but the child died soon after it was born. It weighed only four and a half pounds. And how it had screamed; the mother had nothing upon which it could gnaw or bite! Haehnlein and Ackermann were formerly in the same regiment and Haehnlein had brought Ackermann to this house. All this Herr Herbst had learned from conversations he had overheard.

"Go to sleep!" hissed Frau Haehnlein. The bedstead creaked and she coughed.

"Sleep? Sleep? I can't sleep," answered Haehnlein's hoarse voice, and again he dragged himself back and forth.

The wall was as thin as paper, in short, a tenement house, where every word could be heard.

The woman whimpered.

"Don't cry, possibly it will come sooner than Ackermann says!" said Haehnlein consolingly. And then he added in a declamatory tone: "The people of the earth will rise against their tormentors!"

Often Haehnlein could be heard walking up and down the whole night through until day dawned. Herr Herbst had long since grown accustomed to this. When he had restless nights this unending step even seemed to quiet him. A man, a suffering one, such as he, quite near by.

It grew quiet behind the wall, and only Ackermann's typewriter could be heard rattling away energetically. It could not be so very late, for voices were still to be heard in other parts of the house. Doors slammed, and at times the house door banged until the whole building trembled.

The long, terrible night lay before him.

His legs were swollen from weariness. They were like clouds streaming out into infinite space. And so he must now sit the whole night through, listening to the slightest noise—also to the noises that came from the unknown.

Strange fate that had led him to this room! The hump-backed host of "The Lion of Antwerp" had recommended it to him, at that time, when he decided he could not return to the Blücherstrasse. He had long since given up trying to find explanations for things; everything was fate. Every step in human life was guided by unknown forces, good and bad. Senseless to fight against them. Well, he didn't fight any more, he didn't inquire any more—he was in the hands of the Almighty by whom the hairs of his head had been numbered. Let it be that way. It was best so!

Frau Hachnlein behind the wall began to whimper, to complain, to plead. Now it was beginning again. It didn't help her any. Man is an animal . . . although his wife was suffering . . . this Hachnlein was an animal.

There, it was still again; the noises in the house grew fainter and fainter, and nothing was heard but the rattling of Ackermann's typewriter.

"Go on writing, you in there!" said Herr Herbst to himself—just to have something to say, the night was long—"Your posters, your speeches . . ." For many long weeks this soldier in the wide coat had been an enigma to him. What was his occupation, what did he do in the night? Often he delivered speeches, regular speeches. A short time ago, at the time of the January strike, he had suddenly recognized him! With his own eyes and ears he had seen and heard him as he addressed a crowd of strikers, and what he said, good Lord! There was not the slightest doubt, he was a spy, a secret agent . . . belonged to those mentioned in the newspapers who accepted money from the enemy. He stood on a pile of stones, spoke, screamed and swung his soldier's cap. No more shells! But just then the police came and they all ran—he also ran. Just as fast as any of the others—ha-ha! How they ran, they were so afraid . . .

Often friends visited him, generally young people, who screamed at the tops of their voices and all talked wildly

at the same time. Indiscreet, inexperienced. What kind of people were these? Well . . . the same kind as he, not a whit better. Nothing was sacred to them, nothing before which they shrank. The Ministers, what were they? They—quite simple—asses and criminals! And the generals—also quite simple—dressed-up fools! And the diplomats—complacent ninnies! Yes, they, they, these young people, they were far wiser than these ministers and diplomats! But the highest rulers, what were they? Now he would be ashamed to repeat the word. And also the enemy statesmen, presidents and ministers, what were they—just the same criminal rabble! No, there was nothing that inspired them with respect. Did any one ever hear such a thing: the German government consisted of anarchists who did nothing but think day and night how they could ruin the German Empire in the quickest possible way? What? Was that conceivable?

But what about these people in Russia, these robbers and thieves? They were saints, nothing more and nothing less.

Yes, the world must be entirely reconstructed from the very foundation up—and they, these young people, who were screaming at the tops of their voices, they alone knew how this should be done.

Often they whispered, murmured, mysteriously . . .

Just at this moment Ackermann laughed loud in his room and said: "No one could believe it possible—"

And then his machine rattled as if it were mad.

Not believe it possible?

Just wait, you, you . . . eh?

You've forgotten that God is watching over every step, that the hairs of your head are numbered—have entirely forgotten the divine dispensation.

On Sundays they often sat until late in the night debating, screaming, all talking at once, until not a word could be understood. New, an entirely new world was to rise from the ruins!

And his girl was always there on Sundays! It was quite conceivable that this, this—had a girl, but that she sat there while they declared that nothing was sacred to them. No, no, it didn't disturb her in the least. On the contrary. She made the tea and said: "Please, gentlemen—please." And so it went on every Sunday until two or three in the morning. "Please, gentlemen"—and they smoked so that the fumes floated through the doors and made him cough, although he himself was a great smoker. Words flew through the air, words, wild, foolhardy words.

And his girl was sitting there in their midst!

There—the typewriter had suddenly stopped. Ackermann left the house. His step hurried down the stairs, and the house door closed with a bang. He would remain away until day began to dawn.

When does the fellow sleep? thought Herr Herbst lying in his bed.

It had now grown quite still. The beams creaked, there was a rustling in the walls, the walls seemed to sigh.

Yes, quite still and dark.

The little old man sat there in the midst of the interminable darkness and stillness, and suddenly he began to whisper. Softly, oh, so softly—only he could hear it.

"Robert—my son—beloved, dear one—my darling—!"

Tenderly he stretched out his little hands towards the darkness.

## 10.

The General returned from his office on the minute. As usual, he chatted a little with Niki, the canary bird; but suddenly he broke off the conversation and displayed a quite incomprehensible interest in the waste paper basket. At first he looked at it searchingly, then began to rummage around with his hand, and finally he turned out the contents on his writing desk. It certainly was strange, he came

across every insignificant scrap of paper—for example, would you believe it? scraps of that letter he had written in a tearing rage a full week ago to the editor-in-chief of a big newspaper much read outside of Germany, in which he had told this editor . . . and here this prospectus—everything, every little scrap.

“Strange, extremely strange!”

Not a scrap, not even a little corner of that green envelope. He would have recognized the color at once. Wait, here it is—no—it was only some notes for his proclamation! The Army of Women—in which he recommended this enormous fallow army to mobilize systematically for the welfare of the Fatherland. Too ridiculous, every little trivial thing, but not a trace to be found of this letter, nothing.

The clock was already striking eight.

On this evening the General had broken his supper engagement with Frau von Doenhoff, on the plea of work, and had promised to appear later on in the evening.

The lights were burning in the dining-room.

The candelabra were of snow-white glass, tulips, prisms, pearls. A grotto of shimmering snow, which shone without melting.

The room was empty. Ruth had not yet come.

That just this letter . . . Ruth entered the room. She was gay and in good spirits, and with a boyish bow wished him “Good evening!”

“Frau von Doenhoff sends you her greetings, papa,” she said as she seated herself.

“Were you there?”

“No, I met her on the street.”

Jacob plunged out from his hiding-place behind the cupboard, to pick up the serviette which the General had dropped.

“Is Otto doing well?”

“Yes, only two or three weeks,” answered the General.

It almost looked as if a conversation were under way. The words passed so easily to and fro. But then the General wrinkled his brow as if some unpleasant thought had just passed through his mind.

Silence. Jacob changed the plates. The General's countenance indicated distinctly that he did not wish to be disturbed further.

Suddenly he raised his face from his plate and looked full at Ruth. Unquestionably she had changed! That he had never noticed it until to-day! She had her hair done a different way, knotted low on her neck. It looked as if it had just been washed and hastily tucked up. This coiffure displeased the General, it indicated carelessness. As usual Ruth's face was wreathed in smiles, and especially the long eye-lashes caressing her cheeks seemed to smile. Oh, how well the General knew this face and this smile!

It was the face of her mother and the smile of her mother. This was one of the reasons that the General avoided looking at his daughter.

Ruth raised her head and for a second her eyes were fastened upon him. How well he knew these eyes also—soft, shimmering, and yet full of enthusiasm. But at the slightest thing the enthusiasm changed into hysteria.

"Jacob!" The General pointed with his knife to the bottle of Fachinger. The man flew out of the door. The General's face flushed heavily.

Where had she been?

Now this would have been the best possible moment . . .

Moreover, it would have been the most natural thing in the world to have put the direct question to Ruth as to where she had been last night. Very likely with friends and had spent the night because no taxi could be found. Possible! Probably the matter could be cleared up in the most harmless manner. But this question violated all the traditions of the Hecht-Babenberg family, in which every member formed a little world to himself, which scrupu-

lously avoided coming in contact with that of the others. A sort of airless space separated these worlds, swallowing up their words and distorting their sound and their meaning.

The eyes of the Sommerstorffs would be raised to his, full of astonishment as if he had expressed something wholly impossible and unthinkable. Something that lay wholly remote from the world of the Sommerstorffs, which the world of the Sommerstorffs had never comprehended and could never comprehend. Ruth would smile and raise her eyebrows. The truth was, the General did not like this fluttering of the brows and the faint superiority which lay in the Sommerstorff smile.

His thoughts grew obscure, inexplicable, his brow grew darker.

Jacob, with his big hands stuck into white woolen gloves, cautiously placed the bottle of Fachinger on the table.

"Is the car there?"

"Yes, Herr General!"

And the limousine tore down the Tiergartenstrasse towards the Lessing Allée . . .

"It's to be hoped that he will soon be given a command at the front!" thought Ruth, who left the house immediately after the General. She had a rendezvous with some one at the Kemper Platz quite near by.

This some one was already standing waiting at the Roland Monument. Ruth ran like a young girl—straight into the arms of the some one.

"Papa came quite unexpectedly to supper," she bubbled forth. "His temper is growing worse and worse. I wish to Heaven that he'd soon be sent back to the front!"

"I hope to God that soon there'll be no more front—"

"A marvelous evening, but somewhat cool!"

"It is always marvelous when Ruth is here!" And the some one took Ruth under his coat.

## 11.

Little Herr Herbst was still sitting in the midst of the interminable darkness whispering to himself tenderly the name of his son. His little hollow-cheeked face was bathed in tears.

See—now it was growing lighter at the door—he had come! The dearest, the well-beloved, was returning from the world of shades as men call it, to his father, as he did every silent dark night.

A livid light seemed to issue from the door—and he shuddered. Yes, yes, it was he, the beloved, the best-beloved. He could distinctly see him standing there in the livid light: just as he looked in the picture they had at home. A soldier wearing a helmet, a sharpshooter, young, a very young boy, his flower-bedecked gun in his right hand, just as he was the day he accompanied him to the station.

He had brought an icy wind with him from the land of shades. The old man shivered. The cold seemed to crawl over him, and he could feel his bald skull shrinking. Fear made his heart ache and yet it was sweet—solacing.

“Is it you?” he whispered, filled with ecstasy.

“My son, my darling!” And he stretched out his icy, little blue hands towards the door.

“Are you here again?” The apparition never spoke and he did not wait for an answer. It stood motionless and gazed steadily at him. Sometimes he saw the eyes distinctly, not always. The eyes of his son, the brilliancy and coloring of which he never forgot—brilliant and crystal clear like the eyes of an innocent animal—whereas the features of the face sometimes escaped his memory.

“Have you come back again to papa—?”

But horror! Again the dear one began to bleed . . .

Suddenly a dark clotted mass poured from his temple—unquestionably the mortal shot had struck him just there. The blood flowed, it streamed forth, it colored the uniform,



it streamed noiselessly down to the floor, an endless stream. And the dear one stood motionless, bleeding noiselessly, without a sound . . .

"How terribly you're bleeding to-night, my dearest!" whispered the little old man—ah, so softly!—and wrung his hands. The tears gushed down over his cheeks. "Will you never find rest, my dearest one? Just wait, have patience—I've written to him, he will answer—without a doubt . . . I'll do everything, leave nothing undone—I swear it—my darling—"

And he whispered, wrung his hands, covered his tear-stained face.

Suddenly it grew light, the light of a candle, and instantly the apparition vanished. Nothing remained but the light-colored outline of a door with a black lock.

But it was not a candle. The moon had appeared over the roofs. A ray of light suddenly cleared the darkness from the room. Herr Herbst snatched his hands back out of the ray of light, as if they had been burned.

The darkness was banished and now noises again became noticeable. Voices murmured, coughing was heard, all sorts of coughs, from the whistling cough of a woman to the barking cough of men with heavy colds. The entire house was sleepless, the moon only needed to rise over the roofs, it seemed to be of glass. The lids stood wide open, even in slumber, as if their owners were dead, and the rays of the moon burned like needles into the bared brows.

A child whimpered in the adjoining room, a bedstead creaked.

"Are you up again?" whispered some one on the other side of the wall.

"Yes, yes," answered Haehnlein's hoarse voice. "I'm just looking at the moon!"

"It is unbearable."

"Quiet yourself, mother—soon, yes, soon!"

Herr Herbst sat up in bed worn out, trembling from ex-

haustion. The conversation with his son had robbed him of all his strength. It seemed as if the dear one sucked all his strength. His heart throbbed in his breast. He wiped the sweat from his brow.

Ah, how terribly he had bled to-night—he suffered—he must act quickly, quickly!

He sank into deep thought. Slowly, as if drugged, his thoughts stirred in his bald head, heavy with sleep they crawled on like the shadows on the roofs. The whispering and hissing on the other side of the wall did not disturb him. Haehnlein's same old litany—the litany of misery and hunger. No, the misery of strange people no longer made the slightest impression upon him. Words, futilities! Why should not others also be unhappy, all of them. A short time ago he had seen a well-dressed man run over by a motor lorry—the heavy double tires passed directly across his right leg. He had been in a desperate mood but instantly it put him in a better humor! The unhappy gloat over unhappiness, the sick over sickness, the poor over poverty. Only the happy, that is quite a different thing, they do not gloat over happiness. They have no eyes for other people.

Slowly . . . but finally his thoughts wound their way through the darkness.

No, no answer. Hundreds were waiting!

"The General does not answer!"

Excitedly he raised himself in bed.

But what would he do then? What then?

In a twinkling he had his feet on the floor. He sat in the moonlight looking out of the window. His skull shone like a quicksilver bullet, his eyes shimmered like the eyes of a fish that had been dead a long time. He listened to himself, he delved about in his brain. Suddenly his glistening skull began to steam, smoke curled out of his eyes. Again the quicksilver bullet shone. But suddenly he sat there headless. The moon had glided behind a chimney.

When it again shone into the room, Herr Herbst had shrunk to half his size. He had taken off his ulster.

Quickly, quickly he tore off his collar and the little black cravat and plunged his head into ice-cold water. The moon sparkled.

The moon had called into life a tremendous idea in the brain of the little Herr Herbst.

He could not pour enough ice-cold water over his head. Feverishly he dried his face, put on his collar and cravat.

"Yes, yes, why not?" Quickly he slipped into his ulster.

"I will—"

"I will—"

*"I'll go and see him!"*

He was already running out of the door. Halt! Whither! It is the middle of the night! But nothing could hold him back. With rapid steps he hurried down the empty and deserted Ackerstrasse.

Ah, and how icy cold it was!

## 12.

Dora laughed merrily.

"Eight thousand marks, Ruth, I ask you now! For such a simple dinner gown! And a chemise, not in the least luxurious, rather cheap lace, with a few bows of ribbon—five hundred marks! It's really a comedy! I no longer dare enter a shop!"

"But how will it all end?" asked Ruth, raising her brows. "Half of the population no longer has any underwear. The children are sleeping on paper!"

Dora found that very droll.

"How will it end? Quite simply, next year we'll all be dressing in paper, Ruth, and that will be tremendously amusing! You remember the woman who appeared on Unter den Linden without stockings? That's a charming fashion if one has nice legs. But just think of a party with

every one dressed in paper! The industry will invent the most fascinating colors—" Here Dora was so convulsed with laughter that she could not proceed. "The General said, by the way—"

"What did papa say?"

"He said that the industry had discovered substitute stuffs which were far better than silk and wool. For example, now, what is it called? this patent fiber? The entire Lüneburger Moor was to be sown with nettles, which, however, would take some little time. But listen, Ruth, what a brilliant idea! I think I shall request every one at my ball to come in paper clothing!" Dora was so pleased with this idea that she clapped her hands and again her laugh filled Ruth's little semi-darkened salon with gayety and the tinkling of a thousand little bells. "You look sweet, my child. Where did you get that blouse? Here let me feel it! That's really silk! Everything that one buys nowadays for an awful price is nothing but rubbish that formerly our negroes wouldn't have worn. But just think, Ruth, of the time when we shall go to sleep in a paper serviette—!" It was quite impossible for Dora to get away from this droll fantasy.

Ruth made the tea, while Dora prattled and laughed. She followed every one of Ruth's movements with affectionate glances, for she loved her. Yes, sincerely loved her, although she was so entirely different; perhaps, just because she was different. And in many respects she found her so diverting! For example, her hat was perched on a flower vase and—would you believe it!—one little dark kid glove lay forsaken on the sofa. Wasn't that too dear? And the teakettle stood on the writing desk, and naturally the boiling water overflowed on to the table. No, how perfectly fascinating! Formerly Ruth had often come to see her and they had played and sung together.

"Do you still sing, Ruth?"

"Only very seldom, I'm sorry to say!"

But now she was seldom to be seen. Dora took no offense at this. In spite of it she loved her just as she did all persons who did her no active harm—at least, when she was in a good humor. But when she had one of her bad moments—well, she could have looked on quite composedly and seen the same people slaughtered before her very eyes—but that was naturally exaggerated. Dora could be very cruel, very cruel, at least she thought she could.

Butzi suddenly let go his hold upon the black and gold evening slipper—the second one—which lay on the floor near the sofa, and slunk to the door.

He stuck his nose into the crack under the door and breathed heavily.

And then he bounded back on all fours, terribly frightened.

The door opened—cautiously—softly—and the broad stone-colored face of the General, looking grave and thoughtful, became visible. But instantly the thoughtful expression and the stone color vanished. Embarrassed and surprised, the face drew back, flushing a dark red.

The General took fright just as Butzi had done, and like Butzi he jumped back startled. In fact, Butzi was the first to recover himself and began to growl.

“General!” cried Dora, surprised.

“Papa?” questioned Ruth, softly and incredulously.

“I beg your pardon, will the ladies, please . . .”

Dora laughed. “Do come in, General, we’re just having the most interesting conversation.”

“—will not disturb you—I only wished—I heard voices—good-day, ladies.” And instantly the General vanished, closing the door softly behind him.

Butzi had won out. He growled maliciously at the retreating enemy.

“What did he want?”

Ruth shook her head. “I’ve no idea,” she answered. “He never comes to my room!”

"He's suspicious, Ruth," said Dora.

Ruth looked up and flushed.

"Yes, yes, he thinks you have a lover," continued Dora, winking her eye.

The color vanished from Ruth's cheeks. She grew pale.

"He thinks—?"

"Yes, you know he caught you recently. You didn't come home until early in the morning. He told me about it. Heavens, how frightened she is, the little one. Of course, I tried to talk him out of it. But you know that I would."

"I was at the Platen's in the Grunewald, and it grew so late."

"And you didn't tell him that?"

"I? Why? He didn't ask. And after all it's none of his business. Do you take saccharine, Dora? I have no sugar."

And so they began drinking their tea—it had been postponed long enough—and outside the rain was pouring down—what weather, in this terrible Berlin! Dora lighted one of her thick English cigarettes.

"But possibly he was right, the General?" and again she winked her right eye.

"What do you mean by that?"

"Well, I mean only—so-so . . ."

Dora laughed. She took delight in embarrassing shy people. But then she changed her tone.

"And how are things going with Dietz in Bucharest?"

"Very well, thank you. He lives in a charming villa, goes riding every day, in fact has everything he could wish for!"

"Listen, Ruth—but just look, Butzi is tearing up your shoe—"

Ruth took the shoe away from Butzi and tossed it on to the sofa where its rescued mate was lying.

"I was about to say, Ruth, when you are established at Ferchow—it's by far the most splendid country-seat in Pomerania, with the Chinese pavilion on the island in the

lake—fairy-like, the Arnims own the adjoining property—when you go to live at Ferchow, you must promise me—”

Here Ruth interrupted her.

“I shall never live at Ferchow, Dora!” she said, emphasizing every syllable.

“What? But—?”

Ruth looked Dora straight in the eye.

“No, never!”

“But do explain to me, my dearest—?”

“Don’t let’s speak of it any more!”

“But I beg of you, Ruth, won’t you—?”

Dora’s blue eyes were twice as large as usual in her astonishment.

The next time the General was more cautious. He first inquired whether his daughter had gone out, and to make assurance doubly sure knocked twice before entering. It had been really too painful for him the last time—Dora sat there, Ruth, he had not even knocked—what must they have thought of him?

He had not been in Ruth’s room for years. For years he had not concerned himself in the least about Ruth, had given her perfect freedom of action, according to his principles. But now it seemed to him the time had come. . . .

It was not without a certain timidity that he entered the room.

Instantly the two eyes were fastened upon him, although he had turned his head in the other direction, for he knew quite well just where the picture hung on the wall. Those two eyes beamed upon him, and the General could feel their shimmering gaze through his very eyelids, yes, even through his head when he turned his face away. He cleared his throat and murmured something to himself in order to recover his equilibrium.

Reproachfully he shook his head: What disorder!

This untidiness she had also inherited from the Som-

merstorffs, not from him, by any means. Thousands of memories came tumbling through his head. There was, for instance, the day her glove had split and they were calling on the commander of the regiment. It was extremely painful. The regimental chief instantly saw the tear in the glove, indeed, he looked as if he could see nothing else. And guests arrived, for instance, who had been invited for eight o'clock. They came and the salon was in complete disorder. Sheets of music were strewn all over the place, and the table-cover lay full of rose leaves, which had fallen from a withered bouquet. How in all the world was he to excuse himself to the guests? But the Sommerstorffs simply laughed such matters away. It was just about things of this sort that they could laugh in the most boisterous manner. They were utterly lacking in an instinct for that sort of thing. Yes, that was the way of the Sommerstorffs. It was not for nothing that they came from the South.

One of Ruth's hats lay on the table in the salon, near it a pair of scissors and a spool of thread. The needle was sticking in the table-cover. Newspapers were strewn over the sofa and in the corner lay an evening slipper. Everywhere books, stationery.

The General picked up an open book from the writing desk. Marx!

Karl Marx!

A socialist!

Certain passages were underlined. She was studying it.

For a moment the General was inclined to find this book unsuitable reading for a young woman of the German aristocracy. He was just about to shake his head. But he mastered this inclination. If she liked it—why not—if she was interested in it? Even a Socialist could have much to say that was interesting—and as for that, in the hour of danger, they had placed the Fatherland above the Internationale, had granted the credit, as much as was required,



and went with the others through thick and thin—unquestionably they had proven themselves to be sincere and genuine patriots!

Numbers of books. Heaps of books. Both authors and titles were unfamiliar to him. He had no time to read books . . . his duties . . . for twenty years or more he had not taken a book into his hand—for thirty, perhaps, with the exception, of course, of scientific military works.

Moreover, these modern authors, as far as he knew anything at all about them, loved to deal with problems, lived in a fictitious world—whereas his world, the General's world, was a world of hard facts, without any glossing over, without lies and romance, simply one of hard facts.

A letter fell from one of the books: "Dearest Ruth"—instantly the General put it back between the pages. Again he shook his head reproachfully. That she had not troubled to consider that intrusive persons, perhaps Therese, might read the letter! Positively appalling, this similarity in the traits of the two characters! Her mother also had left the most important letters and documents lying around. It was in this way that the trouble began. . . .

Again he felt the gaze of the beaming eyes, so strongly that the hand holding the book seemed suddenly weary. Distinctly, quite distinctly, he heard a voice in his head which had long slept. He did not understand the words spoken by this voice, but he heard the sound of it, quite distinctly, although it had been many years since he had heard this voice for the last time.

The voice grew louder and louder and there was a ring of gayety in it. He could hear quite distinctly how this voice which seemed to come from somewhere in his head—it seemed to be hidden somewhere!—began to laugh, gay, derisive laughter. The General put down the book.

A great feeling of sadness suddenly welled up in his heart.

"What am I really doing here?" he asked. Thought-

fully he left the room while the eyes of the portrait followed him to the very threshold.

And Marx? Why not Marx? But nevertheless it was peculiar that this name continued to resound in his head.

As he crossed the corridor he had the sensation of having just come from another world and another age. Niki trilled out his little song joyfully and all the other things in his room suddenly seemed to emphasize their reality and their familiarity.

Moreover, it had been very chilly in Ruth's room.

### 13.

A high hat appeared in the empty neglected-looking Ackerstrasse—was it possible on a week day, at such a time? The silk hat drew nearer, it vanished into the bar of the "Lion of Antwerp."

The humpbacked proprietor blinked with his somber owl's eyes and brought forth a bottle of red wine and the chessboard.

"My compliments," he whispered, as was his wont, softly—at one period of his life he had not spoken a word for years at a time. "My word! You're living in style these days! Always the same official matter?"

"Unfortunately nothing came of it yesterday. I had neglected—had no visiting cards. Everything must be done with due form. Suddenly yesterday I asked myself: well, and the visiting cards?"

Herr Herbst had undergone a change. The razor had been over his chin and cheeks and the little wreath of hair was cut somewhat shorter. As a matter of fact, the volume of his head had only been reduced by a trifle, but it seemed as if it had shrunk to half its size. And in the back of the neck, where the head begins, two hollows as large as a man's fist were visible. He had on to-day, as during the past few days, a long black Prince Albert somewhat

creased, and again the host of the inn paid him a compliment as his eyes fell upon the long coat. This little old man, who, with his glass in his hand, danced around for the girls from the munition factories and made himself the laughing-stock of these saucy creatures—who was he? Evidently had seen better days, a crack-brained creature—he claimed to have been a teacher in a high school, but what did people not claim nowadays?

“But the cards are to be ready to-day. He gave me his word of honor,” added Herr Herbst, and his dirty little hands rattled around among the chess figures. This rattling of the chess figures always reminded him of a little marble table, with a highly polished copper edge—his regular café in the provinces, once, long ago it was.

“You have the first move, Herr Herbst!” whispered the humpback and shoved his sharp chin over the chess-board.

Herr Herbst seized his glass. His hand trembled. Yes, he had dark days back of him. He pressed the wine on his tongue between the yellow stumps of teeth. Suddenly he saw quite distinctly—would any one believe it possible?—the General’s face in the glass! Quickly he closed his eyes and poured the entire contents of the glass down his throat. Still another glass—and now he was ready to play.

Strength and courage streamed out of the wine.

Fear? No, no, he had no fear.

He took the aluminum case from his pocket, lighted a cigar and settled himself in his chair.

“And now we will try something quite new.” He drew the knave.

The humpback shoved his pointed chin still farther over the chessboard.

A trap? What, how? What was he going to do with the knave?

“But you’ve moved a square too far.”

“Too far? Well then, we will just move him a square

further back." At this moment Herr Herbst felt himself so superior that he moved his pawn back three squares.

The game began. Both were passionate chess players.

Herr Herbst leaned back in his chair and blew clouds of smoke into the air.

Fear? How's that? Of whom? Of him?

The cards would be ready at four o'clock, well and then . . .

Again he drank a little glass.

Everything had been planned out in his head. Every word, the speech lay ready in his mind. And—ahem!—even the bows and the address had also been practiced, quite in detail. Why should he be afraid? And after all he was not the Kaiser, was he?

He would unquestionably force him this time to render an account, to give him every bit of information he demanded.

He even had the letter in his pocket, the regiment of sharpshooters attacked on August 4, and not a man returned. Why, then, on August 5—naturally he would ask this very politely, very modestly. . . .

"Check!" he called loudly and warningly.

"Really? Well, now you'll permit me to take the last move back—I shall have to consider. You're moving too quickly to-day!" The somber owl's eyes of the humpback began to glow.

And really, Herr Herbst attacked stormily. To-day he felt himself vastly superior to his opponent, and he would have wagered any sum that he would win, although the humpback was generally the stronger of the two; formerly, he could never in the world have defeated him.

After all he was not the Kaiser. And in the end, he could be of equal service to him! No, indeed, it was by no means a small favor—looked at in the right light. Possibly he would say: "But my dear Herr Herbst, why did you not come before this?" Who knows? Who knows?

Yes, he would begin this way. He would tell of the young people next door—of their ideas, their views, dangerous views—yes, the General would understand more quickly than any one else.

And then he would begin to speak of the girl . . .

"Look out, Herr Herbst!"

"I see already—a regular trap. Eh, eh!"

"But what are you doing?"

"I'm forced to take back the last move."

"But, but—"

"You've already taken back one move."

At first, he had taken no notice of this girl—thus he would begin. Why should he? All these soldiers had girls, isn't that true, it was always that way. Not noticed her. On Sundays she made tea and passed around cigarettes. She herself spoke very little, only now and then she threw in a word. You could scarcely hear her voice, it was so soft.

She sometimes came during the week and then she was alone with him. Well, after all they were young people, what was there especial in that? He didn't listen, was occupied with his own thoughts. But one evening, suddenly they began to speak of certain things—how interesting! What is that? Evidently the girl was quite familiar with the family matters of a certain high personage. Well, it was strange, to say the least, that she knew so exactly . . .

Lost in his own thoughts Herr Herbst leaned back in his chair and blew the smoke into the air.

And so they chatted of certain things, quite harmlessly. They've no idea, of course, that I'm listening, think no doubt that I've gone out.

I see a light shining through the crack above the door.

I know quite well what's proper and what's improper—but, but, I can't resist the temptation. The light fascinates me. I carry a chair to the door, very cautiously, of course—stand on it—so, so—stretch my neck and peep through the

crack. I peer into all the corners of the room. Ah, there he sits, the soldier, and by his side—on the sofa. . . .

Suddenly I get a glimpse of her full in the face.

The fright—you may believe me—the surprise—I came within an inch of falling from the chair! For even though I had thought this and that—I'd never really believed it—it seemed to me to be impossible—ahem, the voice, the speech, but it could not be possible—and yet—yet!

This girl, Herr General, this lady . . .

"Check and mate!" cried the humpback triumphantly, and Herr Herbst started back.

Defeated then, defeated again!

Herr Herbst looked at his watch—curiously enough he possessed a gold watch—and suddenly was seized with restlessness.

"But now it's about time for me—the exact time!" he said, and pushed his silk hat down hastily over his bald head. The silk hat, like the stiff black one, was a size too large for him, and sank down over his protruding green ears.

He left the bar in the greatest haste.

It was already growing dark. Noiselessly and unceasingly, the black rain of ashes fell upon the dying city.

An hour later and Berlin was enveloped in darkness. Impenetrable darkness lay over the German land, impenetrable, black night lay over Europe, convulsed with pain, bathed in blood and tears.

When, oh, when?

Listen! Hundreds of thousands of guns are screaming with lust through Europe's impenetrable black night.

Yes, when, oh, when? Make haste, Redeemer, bind on thy shoes, and make haste if Thou wouldst save us!

Europe's eyes are already blind with weeping, already her heart-beat is halting.

## BOOK III

### 1.

CLOUDS of steam issued from the hall, fragments of smoke fluttered between the iron girders. Everything was fluttering. The suburban trains came in with a screech and went out with a screech. Coats, hats, skirts spun around in the smoke and the clouds of white steam. Clara's skirts also whirled. Her legs were freezing, but she loved to go thinly clad.

The early morning train for the front was late. All the better! How gladly she waited! She had been walking up and down here at the Charlottenburg station for the last hour. Over there at the Zoölogical Garden station stood the Sterne-Doenhoff ladies, mother and sisters, saying farewell to him. The wind whistled through the covered hall from all sides and the roofs out there were swept with a dazzling brilliancy.

Suddenly Clara's heart ceased to beat.

A coal-black monster pushed itself around the corner, smoke belching from the funnel. It came whirling along in a cloud of smoke. The express train. . . .

The Kurfürstendamm crowded with people—she and Heinz. The Tiergarten, blossoming trees—she and Heinz. The steps leading down to the Subway, a stream of humanity, the little café in the Kantstrasse—she and Heinz. As if she were gazing into a clear mirror she saw herself by his side, always by the side of the wide gray army coat. It was only the setting that shifted with lightning-like rapidity—the streets, squares, which they had frequented together. The Tiergarten yesterday, as they took leave of each other—twilight had already fallen—she gave him the

little medallion with a lock of her hair, which she kissed a thousand times until she fell into a hysterical fit of weeping—he was to wear it as a talisman—and suddenly everything vanished in a whirlwind—nothing remained but an empty space through which whizzed the black locomotive.

Her skirts fluttered, she held on to her grass-green cap with the green tassel with one hand, while with her other she waved her handkerchief. She thought of nothing, her eyes glided excitedly along the flying train, and she almost fainted from sheer anxiety that she might not catch a glimpse of Heinz.

There, there, there he was! His hand, she recognized it instantly, waved to her. A smile spread over his blushing face, a glimpse of glistening teeth, and the sheen of blond hair. But on his chest—like a bright star—through his heavy coat—the crystal locket: she saw it quite distinctly. As large and glittering as a star although in reality it was quite small.

Hundreds and hundreds of thousands had already passed over these two rails, and all wore talismen on their breasts. Heinz was gone.

The train had gone by like a flash, but the last two coaches rolled slowly past Clara as she stood rooted to the spot.

The wind blew her skirts up to her thin knees, but she noticed nothing. Soldiers looking from the windows of the last coach grimaced at her.

Then she began to run and plunged down the steps weeping unrestrainedly. A farewell cuts through a young heart like a knife.

Everything was yet a secret, no one knew anything about it, no one knew anything of their vows, their promises, their plans, their tears—absolutely no one.

Scarcely had Clara reached home than the green cap with the green silk tassel lay packed all ready to be sent off. He was to have it. Ah, and how she wept and covered the old green cap with tears and kisses.



By this time the train had passed the first station and Clara moved the little flag on her map. It is necessary to know that Clara had bought a railway guide in order the better to follow the train.

And now Clara was out on the street and though her face laughed in the sun and the wind, tears still burned in her heart. Down the Joachimsthalerstrasse she tripped on her dainty little legs, swaying her narrow hips. She was happy.

Clara was going shopping. She had now to think of the packages for the front just as had millions of other women. When she got home she would move the flag up to Hanover.

She was already thinking of the time when she would begin moving the flag back—the first time he came home on a furlough.

The zone of Paradise lies between childhood and the adult world. Dazzling with dreams, plans, visions, presentiments and wishes. Life spreads out before their eyes, marvelous, sublime, and courageously their steps move forward on the path.

Through this Paradise moved Clara, although she was really walking down the Joachimsthalerstrasse.

## 2.

The little flag was already moving backwards on the map. This was the train that *could* bring his first letter. Could! But it did not arrive. Now came the train that *should* bring the first letter. But it did not come. Then came the train that *must* bring the first letter. But still it did not come. The hours remained at a standstill. The clocks ticked, her heart beat in her throat, and at night Clara sat up in bed with wide-opened eyes.

Finally, on the sixth day, it arrived.

"Here is a letter, little fiancée," said Hedi, and Clara blushed. Hedi had a superior but a good-natured smile for her sister. Bah, this affair! she thought. She will go on

writing letters, waiting for years for the letter-carrier. . . .  
It's always the same thing. . . .

"Please let me have it!" begged Clara, catching her breath.

"If you promise to come with me to Frau von Doenhoff's ball?" (Hedi knew that the Privy Councillor would never consent to her going alone!)

"I promise! Solemnly!—"

What a seventh heaven of rapture! And what a disappointment this letter. . . .

"—we have delightful quarters. A little château. The aviation grounds are quite near. They've put me into an attic room. We're raising ducks and chickens. The privates, in fact, own a little wild boar." Yes, but what has that to do with her?

"It's marvelous here, marvelous, dear Clara!

"The cannons thunder day and night, and almost hourly the guns of defense resound quite nearby. Swarms of enemy flyers are circling about. That is because a long-range gun is stationed here in the forest. The earth trembles like an earthquake when it goes off. A flash of light as thick as a wooden beam streams out of the forest.

"The weather is stormy and dreary and yesterday I strolled about in the neighborhood with the cheeky little Meerheim—you must know him? In a way he is a cynic, but in spite of that we get along very well together. We motored over to X.—Ruins, ashes! Something frightful to see! The cathedral was shot to pieces by the French and English guns and at last the whole structure caught on fire. A symbol of horror, of war. In the evening we ate at one of the messes, where the little Meerheim introduced me to his friends. They lead a wonderful life, eating and drinking and celebrating one fête after the other. Just as we arrived a captain of cavalry was celebrating his Iron Cross-First. There was a frightful lot of drinking and at last it got rank. Disgusting! I haven't touched a drop since I came, as I mean to keep my promise to mother.

Adjoining the Casino is the hospital where the poor devils from the front are brought. On the way home we met a wagon filled with boxes badly nailed together. They were being taken to the cemetery. All this is frightful. But this is only the dark side of the war which otherwise is splendid, Clara, and brings out all the best qualities of a man, heroism, self-sacrifice, comradeship!

"The comrades are all charming fellows. Our chief is simply superb: Captain Wunderlich, beloved and admired by officers and men alike. It's touching to see how helpful they all are to Captain Wunderlich when he gets into his machine. He's lifted in. But they all act as if they only wish to help him a little bit and that he's really climbing in by himself.

"As yet the weather has been very bad the entire time, pea-soup weather! We have only undertaken one squadron flight, and this was a marvelous experience for me, to be flying against the enemy for the first time. I was so happy I sang up in the air."

Already the tears were standing in Clara's eyes. And I? she thought, and I? He doesn't write a word—not a syllable . . .

She only glanced at the description of the squadron flight which occupied two full pages. With tears in her eyes she read that Heinz had been given the nickname of "Chicken." The whole day you could hear: "Where is the Chicken? Chicken, come here!"

And about her, and her love . . . ?

"Recently P.P. was here, you know whom I mean. He paid us a visit. He came driving up a motor-car. He was very elegantly dressed and his officers were wearing fantastic coats made of the most marvelous, soft leather, wonderful gauntlet gloves—everything in fact tip-top. P.P. had his pockets stuffed full of cigarettes, which he distributed among the men. I was obliged to demonstrate, and I looped the loop five times at a thousand meters. . . ."

None of this interested Clara.

It didn't interest her in the least to read what Heinz wrote about the famous Bavarian ace, Seitz, who played the violin the whole day and took his dachshund with him in his machine. Then there was a lot about orders and decorations. Heinz didn't wish to have a furlough until he had received both the iron crosses. And after those, came the *Pour le Mérite*! Ah, good heavens, of course, she would be proud of him, but . . .

"I'm longing feverishly to distinguish myself and to fight for my Fatherland, for great and splendid Germany, which I love above everything else, and to which I have dedicated my whole strength. The most beautiful moment of my entire life will be when for the first time I am permitted to measure my strength with that of an enemy up there! You may be sure I shall not yield until he rattles down to the earth. But when that happens I'll write you all about it, dear Clara."

Then came a few generalities. "How's everything going with you? Well, I hope. Have you yet been to see my cousin, Frau von Doenhoff? How's everything in Berlin? Just now the Bavarian commenced to play on his violin. He plays very well, but often he practices for hours at a time, until we throw anything we can get hold of at the ceiling.

"The next time I'll write you something about my machine. It's quite a new type and climbs perpendicularly into the air like a monkey. Captain Wunderlich is very well satisfied with me and even the comrades have expressed admiration of my flying talents. Good night!"

Clara wept.

Hedi passed through the room, but she did not disturb her little sister. She knew quite well what was in the letter without having read it. She had received hundreds of such letters. She should have warned Clara not to have anything to do with an officer. They were all egotists, vain and superficial, nothing but boasts about battles and chatter

about decorations. No sooner had they been sent to the front than they became wholly mad. That was Hedi's opinion.

Clara went out to look for some wool in order to knit a pair of wristlets. Would any one believe it possible, in the whole of Berlin there was not a bit of wool to be had. And formerly the wool fairly burst out of every shop-window, the whole world knitted day and night, and one would have thought that Germany was crammed full of wool. How could it have occurred to any one that one day it would be exhausted?

Formerly—Clara could remember quite distinctly—she still wore her hair in braids when the war began—one could buy all sorts of wonderful things. Now there was nothing left, absolutely nothing. At best only books and bad cigarettes. The city looked as if it had been plundered!

Everything that she bought for Heinz must be in good taste and of good quality—and cheap. For Clara got an allowance of thirty marks a month. To be sure she had saved up for a long time. . . . The locket alone had devoured a large amount.

"It's for my husband, he's at the front," she said, as she bought it and blushed at this sweet lie.

"So young and already married, madame!"

"Yes, it was a war marriage!"

Clara's eyes beamed. She wandered in Paradise.

Frequently she passed through the street where the Sterne-Doenhoff family lived. Just on the chance of seeing Heinz's mother and sisters. But she had rarely ever had good luck. The sisters resembled Heinz. Especially about the mouth! The ladies of the Sterne-Doenhoff family always wore black. Very close-fitting wool dresses, flat untrimmed hats, pointed shoes. The mother always walked in the middle. They spoke but little and never laughed.

"I love you, Heinz, I kiss you, I press you to my heart. I belong to you, body and soul. Don't do any more 'looping' and take care of yourself. I shall be proud when you receive the decorations, but I love you as you are. The other is purely a side issue. I've wept so much that I am ashamed of myself. I'm a stupid girl. I'm sending you a new lock of hair. Please put it in the medallion. I dipped it in holy water, I forgot to do that with the first one. Please burn the first one, promise me that you will! You must do that so that the talisman will have the right effect! I've prayed so fervently, that I simply can't pray any more. There were six women in the church, praying as I did.

"I'm enclosing a heap of letters which I've written, one for every day, just to unburden my heart. I'm sending them along although they are already old, so you can see that I'm always thinking of you. Of all your comrades the Bavarian Seitz is the most sympathetic to me. He takes his little dog with him in his machine, how touching!

"Berlin's the same as ever. The people are dissatisfied and depressed. One could almost believe that they had lost all hope and yet when one reads the newspapers everything seems to be going better than ever.

"You didn't say anything about looking at our star. Between ten and eleven, don't forget! Yesterday it shone radiantly, and I couldn't help weeping bitterly. I'm such a stupid thing for I'm so wildly happy.

"Hedi's very moody. I think she's unhappy. Everything seems to be at an end between her and Otto. She speaks slightly of him and I don't think that's nice at all. Perhaps she doesn't love him any longer. But that's no reason she should say nasty things about him and declare that he's vain and conceited. We fuss an awful lot. Hedi doesn't believe that love between two people lasts forever. But I believe it. And so the argument goes back and forth. What do you think, my best beloved? You

needn't answer this question. I know anyway what you think.

"Yes, I paid a visit to Frau von Doenhoff. Your cousin is a very original character. She received me in a sulphur-colored silk kimono and her laugh is fascinating. It does one's heart good to hear it! I am living very quietly and I don't go to the theater any more. It seems a crime to me for people to amuse themselves while others are suffering out there. If I'd anything to say in the matter I should have all the theaters closed. By the way, a perfectly frightful habit has taken root with us. The people bring their sandwich suppers along to the theater, and as soon as the house is darkened, they begin to rustle the paper and chew. It's unbearable. You remember, Heinz, that we've often spoken of living in the country and traveling about. I dream of this. Fräulein von Hecht, whom I met at your cousin's, said the authorities knew what they were about in permitting the theaters, movies and concerts. That the people were not to be allowed to come to themselves, they are to be intentionally stupefied. On the whole—she has such strange views that it's difficult to believe that she's the daughter of a general! If she should express herself this way in public she would be arrested and with justice. And yet she's very attractive. She was very nice to me and we walked part of the way home together. I really believe that I could grow to love her, if she did not entertain these terrible views.

"Otto's still in the hospital, but will be dismissed shortly. I hear that he's frightfully depressed, because he cannot return to the front. Perhaps I shall see him soon, as Fräulein von Hecht asked me to come and see her, and possibly he'll be at home. Hedi is now learning to use a typewriter. She says she means to make herself independent, and as soon as she has enough money she'll pack her trunks. I believe she means it, but papa will set her straight on that subject.

"I shall pray again this evening, Heinz! I feel that God is watching over you. Within the last few years I had unfortunately become an absolute atheist, in fact through Hedi's influence, who does not believe in God and declares that if there were a God he would certainly not permit this war where millions of men are being hacked to pieces.

"Farewell, dear Heinz, and don't forget our star. If you would only come back soon, if this terrible war would only come to an end! I pray to God! My heart is tortured.

"Ah, Heinz, how I love you! Here, I enclose this little piece of paper. It looks like nothing, doesn't it? But I've covered it with a thousand kisses which I'm sending to you.

"Your little wife, Clara.

"A little white terrier has suddenly appeared next door. I've made friends with him. He plays in the little garden before the house with pieces of paper blown by the wind—touching! Packages are also on the way."

### 3.

A finger nail pecked on the window of the porter's lodge. No answer. Not a sound. The stillness of death.

"Mr. Porter!—Mr. Porter!"

The porter who resembled Moltke as he grew older—only a fleeting resemblance, it goes without saying, and only in a certain light, was the thought that had passed through the General's head—the porter was asleep.

But the finger nail pecked persistently. And then a snow-white visiting card was pushed through the open window. At that the porter awoke.

He awoke and raised his hands imploringly, whereupon, curiously enough, the little man with the silk hat thrust down over his ears also raised his hands imploringly.

"For Heaven's sake—you—again!"

"I beg your pardon!"



"And to-day of all days!"

"Why—to-day—?"

"His Excellency is—just listen: the whole house is still as a grave! His Excellency's in a bad humor, in a word. And you—I've already told you—ah, ah!"

"Permit me—"

"Ah, ah!"

The aluminum case gleamed.

"No, no, I thank you. You'll get me into trouble."

Suddenly there was a crashing sound as if a bomb had exploded in the hall. But it was only Herr Herbst's silk hat which had fallen on the stone flagging as he endeavored to stick his head through the window.

"I beg of you—I herewith demand politely but at the same time firmly—that—!" The aging Moltke was fairly foaming at the mouth.

"You misunderstand me—" Herr Herbst had restored the silk hat to his head.

"I understand you perfectly. Subject me to annoyances—" The window was shut with a bang.

Again the finger nail pecked persistently.

The porter assumed his official mien, opened the window again and asked in a purely impersonal tone: "You wish?"

"I only wished to ask"—stammered Herr Herbst, who had been thrown into confusion by the official mien—"only ask—it's very important for me, because I'm determined—"

"Determined?" Ah, how cold the voice sounded, without the slightest trace of sympathy.

"Yes, determined!"

"Yes, and—?"

"There's no answer here for me—is there?"

"No!" This time the window was slammed wrathfully.

Herr Herbst raised his silk hat and departed. After a while he returned and without saying a word laid a cigar upon the ledge of the little window.

Without any doubt the hideous red office, with its bare

corridors, was more quiet than usual to-day—as still as death.

Silence, whispering, half-loud telephone conversations. The doors were closed as if they were made of velvet. The orderlies and drill blouses crept around on their tiptoes; if any one sneezed, a head shot threateningly out of some door. The officers, whose desks were close together in the same room, did not dare look up. At any moment the gray stone mask might appear in the doorway. Major Wolff puffed away on a thick cigar and buried his head in his papers. Wind velocity No. 12, without any exaggeration!

“Has he resigned his commission, Weisbach?”

“Gentlemen—!”

“Or the beautiful Dora—?”

“I beg of you most earnestly!”

The adjutant had just returned from his chief and now raised his hand adjuringly. “Wind velocity No. 12!” This was the way he had of characterizing a certain state of affairs. God knows how he, as an artilleryman, had got hold of this expression.

“But tell us what’s the matter!”

“Hush!” Now and again Weisbach put his ear against the padded double door.

A loud provocative clearing of the throat, that of a man who did not have to take other people’s feelings into consideration and did not intend to do so, resounded from the room which was tenanted by the oil painting of His Majesty.

Suddenly it began to thunder in this room, once, then a weaker peal of thunder, twice—again silence. The adjutant changed color. Had any one entered the General’s room? Impossible! On the padded double door in the corridor hung the notice “No entrance! Announce yourself in Room 6!” Wholly impossible. But despite that, it sounded as if he were speaking to some one . . . ?

Halt, luckless man! But it was too late . . .

Suddenly something clicked quite strangely over by the padded door leading to the corridor and the gold-rimmed eyeglass slipped from the General's nose.

Something wholly inconceivable had happened . . .

During the General's whole life, that is to say, so long as he had occupied this high position, nothing of this sort had ever happened. He would have regarded such a thing, quite frankly, as impossible.

There appeared at the double doors—having evaded the outer office, having evaded the adjutant, despite the notice, "Busy" and "No entrance! Announce yourself in Room 6"—there appeared, quite as if it were the most natural thing in the world to enter this room, a common soldier! His appearance was as unexpected as if he had been shot up through the floor by means of some devilish trapdoor.

A drill jacket, an orderly with a large yellow envelope in his hand. This man—a tailor by profession, small, with somewhat crooked legs, Hanuschke by name, commanded to the War Office just as dozens of others had been during the course of the war—had simply made a mistake in the door. He didn't really wish to go into No. 7, his destination was No. 6.

This tailor Hanuschke—just to throw a little light upon him—had fought at the Hill of Loretto, he was one of the little group holding the famous sugar factory near Souchez, of which so much was said at the time. At Souchez, the company chief and three of his comrades had been blown into the air by a heavy French mortar shell near the place where he was standing—by no means a slight scare—he had fought at the Pass of the Red Tower and in Poland, in other words had had many adventures—but now he stood as if paralyzed from fright: without any warning there floated before his eyes a General in a haze of light-blue cigar smoke. For a second he believed himself to be standing in the presence of some superhuman, glittering apparition.

tion which confused his senses, and two white fiery tongues seemed to shoot out at him.

As an experienced soldier Hanuschke took immediate action. This he had also done that time the heavy mortar shell struck near him at Souchez. Like lightning he had thrown himself to the ground and rolled away, but with such rapidity that the hurtling legs and arms never touched him. Only the field-glass of his company chief rattled to the ground near by.

And so he acted in the present emergency.

Automatically and as quick as lightning, he carried out all the tricks of training that he had been taught. In so far as a vanishing consciousness would permit, he made a rapid calculation and when he had reached the regulation distance, began to rehabilitate himself in the eyes of the apparition floating in the clouds. He clicked the heels of his heavy boots together, swung his elbows outwards, brought his hands down to the seams of his trousers, and despite his stature and his crooked legs began to grow. His muscles stretched themselves, the crooked legs were bent in until they became almost straight, the torso lifted itself forcibly from the hips, the head emerged from the narrow shoulders, and finally he grew rigid with his eyes fixed upon the two fiery tongues.

He had participated in twenty-two storming attacks, two and twenty times he had sprung into the jaws of Death at the trill of the whistle—but he felt distinctly that this time he was confronted by a really too terrifying danger.

The two fiery tongues seemed to eat their way along his whole body.

Again the tailor Hanuschke increased in stature.

His trousers, far too large for him, were patched and had been cleansed many times from dirt and blood spots, his necktie was greasy and carelessly knotted. And this drill jacket! But the little tailor stood there like a statue in this

wretched uniform, similar to that worn by convicts and called the "king's coat"!

A thunder crash fell upon his ear. Thunder drove him back to the door and back again to the apparition. (This was the thundering that Adjutant Weisbach had heard from the adjoining room.)

"Twenty-two storm attacks—rather the heavy French mortar—as far's I'm concerned!"

Again he grew. His ribs pressed so hard against the thin drill jacket that they were plainly visible. His chest, pumped full of air, was thrust forward, bared, as it were, to some invisible knife. Everything that the battle fields and hospitals had left of him he now presented to the greatest possible advantage. His puny little ego was concentrated in the gaze of the frightened mouse eyes, whose pupils were extended in fright. His face was a chalky green and between the eyes shone the violet-colored scar left by a bullet which had entered his forehead in Roumania.

Again it thundered, this time less threateningly. The patched seat of his breeches swung through the double doors. When he reached the corridor the sweat was pouring from every pore, and he wiped his face with his sleeve. Precisely as he had done that time when the field-glass of the company chief fell near him.

#### 4.

The General sat working noiselessly, almost without moving, buried in a mountain of documents which lay heaped up on his writing desk.

The icy stillness which he seemed to exhale penetrated through the pores of the stone and fibers of the wooden doors, spread itself through the rooms and corridors until it finally filled the entire house.

With a quick hand the General made notes on the edge of the documents and then laid them in a basket standing

at his right hand. The mountain of papers at his left hand dwindled, while that on the other hand grew higher and higher. Voluminous papers met with a reproachful glance from the General, who tossed them into a separate basket bearing the inscription: Wolff, Report! Wolff, the Major, the giant, had time for everything. He was one of those deplorable bourgeois beasts of burden to be found in every department, who by the sweat of their brows and without any other recommendation than the qualifications of their superior officers were fighting to make a career. Wolff often worked the whole night through.

It seemed to the General as if his hands, the ashen color of which had caused him anxiety for some time, were now assuming a more natural tint. Evidently the excitement just now had done him good! The blood that had congested in his brain—as was always the case after violent mental excitement—had been pressed through the veins and extended the cells in a beneficial manner. An equable warmth spread over his body, and his hands suddenly perspired. A symptom that the crisis was past.

What he needed was action.

If he could only find time for a daily ride!

But his duties—and then what wretched horses there were now in Berlin! He would be ashamed to let himself be seen mounted on such broken-down hacks. How wonderful on the other hand had it been at the front, when in the early morning he sallied forth for a daily two-hour ride, accompanied by his adjutant. And the rumble of near-by and distant guns. Marvelous days, unforgettable!

The General's gaze was lost in space.

But he did not see the Lindenallee through which he was accustomed to ride, the columns of smoke rising from the dugouts of the soldiers, the columns crawling over the hills, no, he saw: Ruth! Ruth and the breakfast table this morning.

“—it's broken then?”

"Yes, papa!"

"And Dietz—he also agrees to it? Ahem—so, so . . ."  
He swallowed the boiling hot coffee.

"Here's his letter, papa, read it."

"Thank you, why? You're no longer a little girl, and after all you are at liberty to do or not do just as you think best. Well—nice affair!"

Ruth kissed his hand. Why did she do this?

Just at this moment Jacob entered the room—how embarrassing! He brought in some toast as it had become almost impossible to eat the war-bread.

So—so, ahem! But why had she kissed his hand? It was entirely unnecessary. There was nothing he so much disliked as any sort of sentimentality.

He had felt her lips upon his cold hand, so warm and trembling, as if imploring his indulgence—at that moment he could not be angry with her. And so Ruth had broken her engagement with Dietz. It was impossible to imagine a more brilliant future than Dietz could have offered her. Of course, it was a surprise to him, a disagreeable surprise, it is unnecessary to say.

The General's gaze again returned to his writing desk. An hour passed, two hours. He worked steadily without a moment's break. Only once he leaned back in his chair: this document was covered with annotations in the handwriting of the All-Highest—a fresh, lapidary style quite after the manner of the great Frederick. Carefully, with an expression of reverence, he laid the document to one side.

The double doors opened and, save for a faint rattling of spurs, Weisbach entered noiselessly. It was time for the signatures, precisely a quarter to one.

Still this faint, not to be misinterpreted brick-red . . .

Weisbach approached the writing desk in wide, deferential curves and hesitating steps in order not to appear too suddenly within the retina of the high chief's eyes. He

bowed slightly every time the General affixed his signature, while drying the ink with a blotter.

The General then arose from his place and started to put on his overcoat.

The same scene was enacted.

Twice a day, morning and afternoon, every day for months!

The adjutant drew near to the General.

"Herr General will permit me?"

"Thank you, I can still manage it alone, thank God!"

Smile on the part of the adjutant, bow, noisy rattling of spurs.

The General slips into the right sleeve and is just in the act of looking for the left. Quick spring forward on the part of the adjutant.

"Herr General will nevertheless permit me!"

And now the General graciously permits. The adjutant smooths down the coat. And the General thanks him with a look, lasting just so long as conforms with his rank.

The General was in the habit of giving trifling instructions as he slipped on his gloves—just whatever came into his head at the moment.

"There is an orderly around here, a smallish fellow with a scar between the eyes. I don't think much of him." At that the General's voice rose threateningly.

Weisbach grew pale. An unreliable orderly; that touched him! He would instantly investigate . . .

Carefully the adjutant closed the padded doors behind the high chief—leaving just a tiny crack. Then he stood for a little while, slightly bowed, ready to spring, and listened, for it was possible that the General would suddenly remember something while he was walking down the corridor. His master's steps grew fainter and fainter. It was not until then that the adjutant finally closed the door, again with a slight bow.

"Well, thank God!" he whispered, breathing more easily.



And as far as this orderly with the scar between the eyes was concerned, he would immediately see to that! Away with this fellow!

Twenty-four hours later the tailor Hanuschke was with his regiment, and forty-eight hours later was again on the way to the front. He had bad luck, as a transport was just leaving. To be sent back from a detail to his regiment—really nothing worse could have happened to him.

Even in the murmuring twilight of Stifter's, the General did not fully recover his mental equilibrium.

Mock-turtle soup, Westphalian ham in wine sauce, baked flounders and apricot pudding—one of the specialties of the house—the menu seemed to him only fair to-day. Every excitement went straight to his stomach—peculiar! The human organism is an enigmatic apparatus.

And these ignoramuses of physicians always say the same thing. . . .

Yes, more action, when his duties claimed him every minute, day and night—these physicians are asses! They for example, drink themselves to death, literally, and still they preach no alcohol, poison, hundred per cent poison for the system, especially for you—and drink themselves into the grave unblushingly.

And these two captains of cavalry at the adjoining table, to-day in gala uniform, they, to put it mildly—there were stronger expressions he could have used—quite took away his appetite.

Figures, avalanches of figures, rolled down upon the General whose appearance a short time ago had so frightened the tailor Hanuschke. Very rarely, perhaps once or twice a year, did the General occupy himself closely with figures.

It was a good thing that only yesterday he had taken out a new credit on the Pomeranian Mortgage and Bond Bank for a hundred thousand. They would certainly grant the credit unreservedly and this would answer for some time.

Everything cost a fortune at the present moment!

He had only a hazy picture of his pecuniary circumstances in his head. His bank account was a kaleidoscope, whirling ceaselessly, confusing, incalculable. But he felt that things were going downhill. Yes, downhill . . .

On the day that his highly revered father, who passed away as a Colonel, closed his eyes in Babenberg, he had found himself heir to several millions and twelve thousand acres of land. But several millions, what was that, if the capital did not multiply itself automatically? Every moment of life swallowed up sums, enormous sums! His dead wife, he did not reproach her for it—on the contrary it was one of the characteristics he loved most in her—she also was—what is the expression one uses for that!—no financial genius. This instinct was simply lacking in her.

Downhill—he grasped this only emotionally. Babenberg was entailed, inviolable—Rothwasser, five thousand acres, very heavily mortgaged.

And every breath one took in life demanded sums, enormous sums! In the last analysis it was quite incomprehensible how people managed to live at all. The house-keeping expenses for instance—enormous sums—dinners, soirées—enormous sums. His private affairs which were nobody's business—enormous sums. A pair of modest earrings, for example, two pearls in a platinum setting, which formerly would have cost less than three thousand marks, cost to-day, can you believe it!—twenty-five thousand marks. His salary during the war, although not inconsiderable, what did it amount to after all? A drop of water on a hot stone!

His credit would by no means be strengthened, well, why not look facts in the face, when it became known in Pomerania that this engagement had been broken.

Figures, avalanches of figures.

The brick-red of the broad face gradually increased to a fiery glow.

"A small black one or a long brown one, Your Excellency?"

"Your cigars are growing worse and worse, my friend."

"Unfortunately, Your Excellency. It's becoming more and more difficult . . ."

He had joyfully welcomed this marriage with Dietz, naturally; to be honest, he had even facilitated the acquaintance—after all he was a father—and the moment would come when he would close his eyes in death, and his children would have to look out for themselves. The General was overcome by sadness as he plunged himself into these thoughts. Yes, the moment was bound to come when he, with his helmet in his hand, must approach the throne of his Maker.

Terrible moment, terrible the thought, of being obliged to leave this world of realities—to go into the Unknown . . .

But the waiter called him back to earth by bringing the liqueur.

Again the General's deep-red face was wreathed with clouds: while the aristocracy was shedding its blood on the battle field, sacrificing life and property, dubious elements were busy filling their pockets. And these dubious elements were buying up the property! A long list of well-known families had already been compelled to sell their ancient family estates. But what would become of the aristocracy, which for centuries had drawn its strength from the soil, when these elements had taken root?

In spite of all this—Babenberg would at any rate remain, even if things should reach such a point that he would be obliged to part with Rothwasser.

But quite aside from material considerations: Dietz was a splendid fellow, imposing appearance, cultured, of rare nobility and generosity—incomprehensible. . . .

Ruth was growing more and more of an enigma.

## 5.

Little Herr Herbst in his silk hat had been walking up and down the Tiergartenstrasse the entire afternoon. Every few minutes he looked at his watch and was continually flicking specks of dirt from his shoes with his pocket handkerchief.

It was no longer so cold. The air of the Tiergarten was striped with red bars of light, there was the smell of spring in the air, at times a warm moist tang, but Herr Herbst wrapped himself up closely in his russet-colored ulster.

He was shivering.

He had not slept the past night. He had drunk until a late hour, in a low gin-shop in the company of genuine rogues, who had brought along their housebreaker's tools—genuine rogues, think of it! That was the reason he was so cold. His silk hat was also cold. It didn't fit down on his head like his other hat, there were cracks through which the cold entered and ascended to his shaven skull as if it had come through a chimney.

"Yes, that's the way it is!" whispered Herr Herbst and began to dream. "For example, he would have my gait. He resembled me so closely! He would even have had the same way of speaking. Certain words are difficult for me to pronounce when L and R come together, for example—Cel—now: celery. He had the same impediment in his speech even when he was at school. In a word he would have been just like me. When I was lying under the earth, he would have been living and walking and speaking—and really it would have been me! Peculiar thing, looked at in the right light, yes, indeed! I should have lived on although I would have been dead. He also would have had children—and so I should have lived on.

"But as it is?

"How is it now?

"Nothing, nothing. Nothing at all. I shall die, be buried,

and everything will be at an end. We're all dead, the entire family has vanished from the face of the earth!"

How clearly he was able to think to-day! Not for a long time had his thoughts come so easily and so connectedly. That was excellent! Splendid! There were so many days when he could only stutter, when his thoughts were continually confused, and that would have created a bad impression.

Again he found himself opposite the gray house. Jacob, who was polishing the brass knob of the house door, made a sign to him. Not yet, his gesture said! Jacob was initiated, had already received ten cigars—and was to receive ten more—afterwards!

Yes, that was really the truth: vanished from the face of the earth!

The high hat disappeared into the depths of the Tiergarten. Herr Herbst was already lost in deep thought.

"Yes, as a matter of fact, everything would have been precisely the same as if I were still living. I lie under the ground and yet I live on. For he is really me—or I am really he—! But as it is—I am like a plant that some one has torn up by the roots and thrown away. And then everything is at an end—at an end, forever . . ."

Herr Herbst stood still in the middle of the path. He trembled.

"Yes—in spite of everything—incomprehensible!

"I'm still living although I'm old, and he, young—barely nineteen—is lying under the ground. In a strange land, possibly not having received the Last Sacrament, perhaps not even decently buried. Without rest!

"Without rest—"

But suddenly he started. His heart stood still. He covered his face with his hands, frightened, in consternation.

The Mars' whistle of the limousine trilled. He knew the sound perfectly.

## 6.

The General got out of the car, his face still lowering. The brick-red had not yet fully vanished . . .

Even that letter—it still lay in the same green-covered book—even that letter furnished no explanation. To be sure, it strengthened certain suspicions, but did not lift the veil. This letter ran:

“Beloved Ruth! At a time of such terrible gloom it seems criminal to think of personal happiness. But at all events, I succumb to temptation.

“The structure of human happiness, the work and the legacy of the noblest, boldest, purest of all peoples, seers and wise men, seems to be undermined in its very foundations.

“We are seized with despair, you, I, all of us, who have believed in the mission of a people.

“This terrible state of affairs has been brought about by innumerable frivolous thoughts, apparently wholly insignificant, innumerable frivolous words, negligible, frivolous wishes, frivolous deeds, all insignificant if considered separately.

“I believe—believe unconditionally in a treasure house of good on earth, the sum total of all good deeds, good thoughts and good words. I believe that this treasure, the only genuine possession of mankind, must be unceasingly multiplied—if darkness is not again to cover the earth. Recent generations, and above all those people who lay claim to civilization, have not multiplied this treasure. They have wasted it, diminished it. The outer crust of civilization sank and—as is ever the case when this happens—the catastrophe came!

“What an error: mankind for the individual!

“THE TRUTH: THE INDIVIDUAL FOR MANKIND!

“Let every individual increase this treasure of the good, the just, and the beautiful—or he is nothing but a thief! Let us take care not to become the murderers of the coming

generations as those of the past generation have been our murderers . . .”

Here the letter, written hastily with a lead-pencil, stopped abruptly. No continuation of it could be found in the book. Therefore no explanation . . .

Just at this moment the doorbell rang.

The General jumped, so violently that he felt a sharp pain in his chest. For even though he considered it to be his duty as a father, it would, nevertheless, be most embarrassing . . .

Again the bell jingled. Heard from Ruth's room, it had a peculiar sound—like a signal. Hastily he put the letter back into the book with the green binding—a work of Lassalle's—and quickly, stealthily, as if he had been caught in a clandestine act—he hurried across the corridor.

However, it seemed to have been a false alarm—thank God for that!

Jacob presented a card.

“An urgent matter. Herr General is expecting . . .”

A wholly unfamiliar name. “Rentier!” written after it. A retired gentleman. Expecting? Evidently the house agent; the bathroom was to undergo some alterations.

Still somewhat confused, the General gave instructions to have the visitor shown in—to Jacob's boundless astonishment.

The General waited but there was no sign of any one. There was something unprecedented in this delay. Any man of good breeding must long ago have entered. The delay was caused by the very meticulous manner in which Herr Herbst at the last moment was wiping his nose. By the way, Herbst—that was surely not the name of the house agent?

Suddenly a shadow darkened the doorway—and instantly the General grew pale. . . .

Instantaneously he recognized this face!

That face which he saw peeping through the glass doors

of the Ministry on Dora's birthday—no, not that one, but the other one which he had seen the evening he had dropped off to sleep, which pecked so peculiarly on the windowpane—that radiated a threat and chilliness. . . . Immediately he recalled the whole thing. It had only happened a few days ago.

The face in the doorway was shy and pale, and it approached very slowly and hesitatingly. Not a threat, not chilliness—only anxiety, helplessness, confusion.

The blood returned to the General's face. The slight feeling of paralysis vanished from his hands.

Herr Herbst in his crumpled black Prince Albert advanced unsteadily into the room with his silk hat in his hand. He made a deep bow, full of respect.

He remained in this position for an uncommonly long time. Then he straightened up with an embarrassed mien and fixed his inflamed, rheumy eyes full upon the General without saying a word.

The General cleared his throat, and Herr Herbst's answer to this was a new bow, a shade less profound than the first.

"Please," said the General, somewhat unsteadily and sullenly, pointing to a chair. The sun shone into the room.

Herr Herbst sat on the edge of the chair holding the silk hat in his hand and began to tremble . . .

Yes, he trembled. His teeth fairly chattered. The seat swayed, he feared that he would plunge to the floor. Fire issued from the walls of the room.

Red as a mountain chain at sunset, shone the broad face of the General in the light of the sinking sun. Gigantic as a mountain the General seemed to Herr Herbst during these seconds of frightful suspense.

"Bloody Hecht"! What? Yes, he—so he was called by his soldiers.

It was not until now, when it was too late, that he realized what he had dared to do, before whom he was now standing.

The . . .



What would he not have given—anything, anything—to be out on the street again.

Carefully the General cut the end of a cigar with his pocket-knife.

"Please—?" he said lightly, rolling the cigar between his fingers. "What is it you wish?" He had fully recovered his equilibrium.

His glance flitted hastily over the trembling heap of helplessness in the shabby black coat. Without being conscious of it, he enjoyed the fear which he inspired in his visitor, for there is no man alive, unless he be of rare magnanimity, but feels himself momentarily superior in the presence of a trembling creature. High and low, masters and servants, the General had never, even in thought, considered the possibility of any other division of society. There were God-given laws which man accepted without giving a thought to them. Until the Day of Judgment there would be high and low, masters and servants. Quite different men had trembled before him—soldiers, officers—and they had trembled only a few moments before they went to their death.

Herr Herbst moved his lips. He must speak, words, any word, it was high time. How long was this other—this man here—the sun had already sunk, twilight filled the room—only this broad unbending face still shone.

And suddenly he whispered. But he was frightened to his very marrow at the words that came from his lips—not in the least those he had planned beforehand and practiced during the night, on the street, on his way hither.

His lips whispered, in a scarcely audible tone:

*"Give me back my son!"*

And as he spoke he raised his hand as if to take back the words he had spoken.

But the General could not have heard them, they had barely penetrated to his own ears.

The General's face grew livid and earthy. The sun had

sunk. Rigidly he stood before him, unrelenting, silent, and his eyes pierced him through and through—cold, without compassion.

Hastily he moved his lips again. But although this time he was able to give a somewhat different turn to his speech, beginning with "If you please!" his lips whispered quite against his will, the same terrible words he had just uttered: "Give me back my son!"

This time somewhat more audibly.

He started, frightened, began looking for his handkerchief.

Then he heard the General's voice. Composed and under perfect control—with that heightened composure and deliberation, employed quite unconsciously by all persons not possessing rare magnanimity, when addressing a trembling old man.

"You wrote to me a short time ago?" said the composed and deliberate voice.

"If you please! Your Excellency!"

"You wrote me—your son, if I remember rightly—?"

"My son Robert, Your Excellency!" Everything was going splendidly. A red flush passed over the pale, little face. The chair had ceased to sway, the General's figure assumed natural proportions.

"He is—?"

"Fallen. On the fifth of August."

"On the fifth, you say?"

"The fifth, Your Excellency. When the Hill of Quatre Vents was stormed. A regiment of sharpshooters had attacked in vain on the fourth; on the fifth—he fell!"

The General let his glance fall reproachfully upon Herr Herbst. He was displeased by this word "in vain," which might easily be construed as a criticism, but was evidently spoken without any particular meaning.

"He died for Kaiser and the Empire!" said the General with a somewhat unctuous deep-toned voice.

The little inflamed eyes blinked. Herr Herbst moistened his thin lips and a few yellow stumps of teeth were visible. For a second it seemed as if his face was about to be distorted into a grimace of devilish derision.

"Just as did hundreds and hundreds of thousands, just as did millions—!" continued the General, raising his voice.

Again the little pale face became distorted, then he drew forth his handkerchief and pressed it to his eyes. He was suddenly overcome. He whimpered softly.

Suddenly, however, there was a crash—just like the one that morning in the hall when he was talking to the porter—the silk hat had fallen on the floor.

"If you please!" stammered Herr Herbst aghast, picking up the hat again. He was seized by giddiness, as he again took his seat wiping the tears from his eyes. The room seemed to be going around in a circle, his stomach seemed to be in the grasp of an iron fist. Ah, what if he should suddenly become nauseated! That would be a nice fix! He had been drinking the entire night and suddenly he felt the effects of it. God preserve me! He had drunk with genuine rogues, who had brought their housebreaker's tools along in a bread bag—in a low pot-house, in a courtyard, which remained open all night. If the General should notice . . .

But the General had walked over to his writing desk and opened one of the drawers. He turned on the light.

"Do you know anything about military maps—Herr—?"  
"Herbst."

"Herr Herbst? Otherwise I would have explained to you my intentions. We fought for three days—the fourth, fifth and sixth of August, and finally were obliged to surrender the hill because there were no available reserves . . ." The General's voice suddenly had a conciliatory ring. He also had lost a son in the war. He, also was a father mourning for his son. The war had broken down all social bar-

riers. During this period it was necessary to overlook many things. "Here is the hill," he added, "where your son fell for the greatness and honor of the Fatherland . . ."

Herr Herbst arose tottering. Yes, his state of intoxication would surely be noticed by the General.

"You are not from Berlin?"

"From the provinces, Your Excellency."

"Your vocation?"

"Formerly a teacher in a grammar school."

"Please come nearer—have no fear!"

At first Herr Herbst could see nothing on the large exceedingly sharp photograph. A sea, how, what was that? Waves, breakers, an ocean. A tumultuous ocean! Then he began to discern the trunks of trees, which were projected criss-cross on this terrifying mountain of waves, and a narrow tunnel leading from the hardened dirt into the middle of the mountain of waves—it was the summit of the hill he was looking at, shot to pieces by the mines.

It was not without a certain vanity that the General was in the habit of displaying this realistic photograph.

"There you have the Heights of Quatre Vents!"

Herr Herbst breathed heavily.

## 7.

History will have to determine, thought the General, as he always did when the attack on Quatre Vents passed through his mind. But—there he deceived himself. History will not determine, history has something better to do. History will quite simply forget this hill. The Hill of Quatre Vents was strategically quite insignificant. Three kilometers further back lay a second, much stronger hill, protected by a river from undermining. The position of Quatre Vents was in fact unfavorable. It could be encircled at any moment, as later happened—it lay exposed to the enemy guns, and the approaches were all open to the

enemy's fire. The General, however, regarded Quatre Vents as the pivotal point of the entire Western front.

And curiously enough, the opposing general, a sort of French Hecht-Babenberg, also regarded the Hill as a pivotal point of the Western front! Unceasingly he sent forward his black regiments. Hundreds of thousands of dark-skinned corpses tainted the air for many months, until swallowed up by the gracious earth, which knows no difference between black and white. Despite enormous losses the French sapped their way forwards persistently, until finally the opposing forces were entrenched scarcely five meters from each other. To clear your throat meant death. It was only then that the real struggle for the top began.

Each side began undermining the other's positions and simply blew up the trenches. One day, just as the General was having his bath, some one came to report that an entire company had been blown into the air. Terrible morning! At times they even fought with knives and hand grenades in the dark subterranean tunnels.

Like madmen the two Generals fought each other, comfortably housed in their châteaux from fifteen to twenty kilometers behind this infernal hill, surrounded by their staffs, telephone apparatuses, orderlies, cooks and bomb-proof shelters.

France expected that the tricolor would be planted on the top of the hill!

Only over our dead bodies, comrades! . . . Yes, at such moments, the General was in the habit of calling his men comrades. From time to time, he distributed Iron Crosses with a solemn countenance.

It finally came to pass that the soldiers on both sides really believed that they were fighting for the pivotal point on the entire Western front.

Herr Herbst panted. His inflamed eyes filled with tears. At first the narrow tunnel vanished, then the trunks of the trees, then the tumultuous waves of dirt—but this terrible

picture had been engraved upon his mind for all time. It was by a miracle that his tears did not fall on this precious photograph, which the General had always meant to have framed—until now he had simply not got around to it—but the General had removed the picture just in the nick of time.

And so here it was—perhaps he had crawled through this narrow tunnel—? Could it be possible that he had fought for his life between these waves of dirt, his death agony resounding? Had he? Had he . . . ?

Could it be possible that a man was born simply to end his life thus?

Herr Herbst trembled from horror. Even the picture of this hill filled him with a terrible horror.

Everything grew black before his eyes, he gasped for breath.

"And it was here—?" he stammered.

"There was very heavy fighting!" said the General soothingly.

"And—his grave—here—?" Herr Herbst's eyes grew suddenly rigid and were turned to the General as if he had lost his mind.

"What did you say?"

"But—it's possible—that he was not buried at all?" His voice rang out shrilly, and he wrung his hands in desperation. Yes, now he understood everything . . .

Everything!

How could a dead man find rest in the midst of these horrifying mountainous waves! How could—!

The General's brow wrinkled. He had given his time to this old man out of pure compassion. It was only to make conversation that he had shown him the photograph. The places where his son had fought must be of interest to him. He had made a concession and exercised all due tolerance. Unprecedented as it was for just any person from the provinces, in a perfectly scandalous suit of clothes, to

hand in a card unceremoniously, under the circumstances . . . But now he began to reproach himself for his too great indulgence.

He was frightened by the expression on the face of the little old man. It could not be possible that this peculiar completely irresponsible old man . . .

Distracted, devitalized, Herr Herbst swayed to and fro on his frail legs.

"And so you gave the command? And then he had—to go up there—?" he asked with a shrill voice.

The General drew himself up embarrassed. A threat seemed suddenly to come from this distorted face, now as white as chalk.

"What do you mean by this question?" he cried, and his eyes took on an ominous glitter. His patience was exhausted. Quite enough of this fellow.

But suddenly the eyes of the little Herr Herbst also began to glitter, they glistened like snow. Hatred gleamed from them, fathomless hate!

He threw his hands in the air with a wild, terrifying movement and flung a terrible word at the General.

"Murderer!"

The General started back and grew pale.

But the little old man again threw his hands into the air, and repeated: "Murderer! Murderer!"

With expanded chest the General took a step towards him, crying: "Leave the house! Out with you—this instant—or—!"

Suddenly, wholly unexpectedly the little old man fell upon his knees and seized the General's hand—all this in a second.

"Pardon me, Your Excellency!" he stammered. "Pardon me—I—I am—I am—drunk . . ."

Yes, at this moment he felt that he was drunk. Otherwise he felt nothing at all. It was clear to him that his drinking bout had taken effect suddenly, alcohol, his devil,

had tripped him up. He had not meant to say all that, he meant to say, yes, what was it he meant to say, but at all events, he had never in the world meant to say anything like that. How could he, he was paying a call . . .

The General, however, felt something quite different at this moment. It was possible that the old man was drunk, but he was more than that, he was crazy. A crazy man was standing before him! Everything was now explained, the letter, the unprecedented visit, his conduct. This old man was insane, a pitiable sight. In that case he would get rid of him as quickly as possible and without creating a scene.

"You're excited—quite naturally so—stand up—" he said in order to mollify his uncanny guest.

"Not until you've forgiven me," cried Herr Herbst while the tears sprang to his eyes.

"Of course I forgive you—"

Immediately the old man rose to his feet.

"It's quite natural that you are excited," continued the General. "We've all had terrible experiences during these years. But I must beg you, I have urgent work waiting for me . . ."

"Please, excuse me . . ."

Apparently wholly pacified Herr Herbst took his high hat repeating: "I beg you to excuse the interruption, Your Excellency—!"

But at the door he stopped, raised his tear-stained face and again a peculiar expression came into his inflamed eyes. Again they began to glitter.

At all events—he remained standing—although the General had dismissed him with a slight mute bow. The expression of his eyes was undefinable. Mockery lay in them—or—was it mockery?

He seemed to be waiting for something.

The General, whose movements indicated that he was about to sit down to his writing desk, turned his head. Ap-



parently this man still had something to say and had no intention of leaving until he had relieved his mind of it.

Suddenly it came to the General what it was. That mysterious allusion in his letter. This allusion, wholly unintelligible as it was in the beginning, but which now seemed to be assuming more concrete form. It was even a possibility that this crazy man was actually in possession of some secret.

"You wished to tell me—" began the General anew, somewhat embarrassed as he turned his face full again to Herr Herbst—"you wrote at that time something about my daughter—something, I can no longer remember what it was—" The General suddenly broke off.

"The gracious Fräulein?" That was the same expression he had used in his letter.

The General had guessed rightly. Herr Herbst had really been waiting for this question—but not to answer it! Oh, no!

The expression in his eyes, this shimmer of derision, had now developed into one of mockery. He put his head on one side and smiled—scornfully, triumphantly, and again the yellow stumps of teeth were visible. He even began to laugh softly.

"I know nothing, Your Excellency . . ."

"Good evening!" said the General shortly. And with a mocking reverence Herr Herbst took his leave.

No sooner had he left the house than a thunderstorm broke in the house.

## 8.

Like a fiery northern light, the sinking sun flamed between the dark clouds, flinging red balls of light through the arches of the Brandenburg Gate which scattered and coruscated down the Linden. Houses and people burned; somber lay the palace at the other end of the Linden. In

the windows of the fashionable shops flamed diamonds, pearls, diadems, orchids, golden bowls and gorgeous vases.

Ackermann, the student, in his wide shabby army coat, passed along the Linden, close to the shop-windows with the orchids, pearls and golden vessels. But he did not see them.

His mouth twitched.

This is the hour, he thought—yes, this is the hour in which the dying once more open their eyes to greet the high heavens. Do you not recall this look from eyes heavy with sleep? This is the hour in which the wounded greedily drink in the dying light with their feverish eyes, for a second later night will come with its uncertainties, its whimpering, the groaning and mewing in the hospital wards.

This is the hour when the prisoners in all the hundreds of camps established by MEN in which to confine MEN take one more turn along the barbed wire enclosures like beasts, before they are driven back into their holes, the hour in which the hands of hundreds of thousands of human beasts convulsively clutch the cold wire. Yes, this is the hour of terrible death—in Flanders and France, in Italy, Macedonia, Turkey, everywhere in this accursed world.

This is the hour in which the misery of the whole earth is multiplied a thousand-fold; yea, the specter of human misery raises itself like a giant over the earth . . .

Ackermann waded through the spectral red deluge of the sinking sun. Blood, not the light of the sun, blood, that streamed into the city from the battle-fields and rose daily like the sea. He could smell the blood, he felt its steaming warmth, just as he had in Flanders, when he felt the thick stream of blood that squirted from the jugular vein of a wounded comrade—and then, yes, then as his own blood streamed over him. It ran over the panes of window-glass, it oozed out of the house doors, overflowed the streets, the palace—down there—already the thick stone walls were moist . . .

Bloody specters rushed by him. Men were already standing in the red flood up to their breasts, but they did not feel it. Soon it would rise to their lips. Blood hung to their eyelashes, their hands were dyed red with blood.

First liars, then robbers, then murderers—that was what the nations of Europe had become! Mankind rushed along madly like a stream in the darkness, which knew not its goal . . .

“And Thou, Lord, above the darkness?

“Why dost Thou wait!”

He was racked with desperation, his heart was torn by agony and pain. His brain was bleeding, his heart bursting.

“Yes, why!”

Suddenly he felt for the wall of the nearest house. He felt distinctly that he was about to sink, that he was being carried away by the whirling stream of blood . . .

“Bring redemption to the world! Lead it back into Thy paths!

“When wilt Thou give the signal!

“Speak!

“Who will speak it—the first word?

“Courage—courage!”

Suddenly he seemed to be lifted into the air by the wide, flapping coat and was borne along without volition. He rushed along through endless glistening brightness, over dazzling plains, and abandoned himself to a hitherto unknown sensation of delight.

Just then some one caught hold of his arm and shook it.

“You are not going to faint?” said a man’s voice.

He came to himself, sitting on some steps in the neighborhood of the palace, somewhat dazed.

Since his last wound he had suffered from attacks of dizziness. At times he had fallen to the ground unconscious.

The sun’s radiance began to pale and the globes of light

to disappear. The Victory on top of the Brandenburg Gate drove her triumphal chariot forward in a pale, livid light. The brooding, threatening darkness began spreading over the gigantic city as if bent upon destroying it. Night was near.

The palace lay somber, cold, lifeless. Death and night streamed from the building, chill and hate. All around stood the monuments, the gloomy equestrians of bronze with their field marshal's batons in their hand—standing there like shadows.

Wherever the hoofs of their horses had been planted on earth, these horses of bronze with their dark riders, the spirits of peace had fled!

But they would also melt away under the glance of His wrath . . .

Ackermann stood up. It was cold. The shadows became denser and crept nearer.

It was in 1914; they had participated in an attack near Langemarck, singing as they rushed along: *Deutschland, Deutschland, über alles!* They had been driven directly into the English machine guns. How many came back from the charge? He was one of the few. How much had happened since then!

Like hundreds of thousands of others he had hastened to the colors; like hundreds of thousands of others in the mad belief that the Fatherland must be defended.

Like hundreds of thousands of others he had rushed headlong into death; like hundreds of thousands of others he had committed murder. Like hundreds of thousands of others, he had been near desperation and had longed for death. Like hundreds of thousands of poor devils of all countries, he had lived in the delusion of serving a sacred cause.

In the course of time he had reached the conclusion that Germany had not been attacked, but that a handful of vain charlatans had provoked the war. A year later, this had

been displaced by a new conclusion that all the countries, now engaged in tearing each other to pieces, were equally guilty.

Suddenly—it was in a railway hospital in Sedan—he could distinctly remember this night filled with groanings and cries—he saw Europe's real face! It was the head of Medusa!

Horried to the very marrow, he stared into this frightful mask—lies, lies, lies! Every line a lie!

Crime, greed, hypocrisy, brazen-faced, that was Europe, nothing else. The great European powers had revived and intensified the age of the robber barons. By the aid of their armies and their navies they plundered the earth, enslaved all the peoples of the globe—yellow, brown, black—until finally, eaten up by suspicion and greed, they turned upon each other. The white race was the most infamous of all the races inhabiting the globe. It had exterminated entire races—but had cultivated rare species of gazelles in its own zoölogical gardens. More than that: it had enslaved its own people! Its mercenaries were trained in schools, barracks, churches, and factories. In schools, barracks, churches, and factories they were daily engaged in the task of destroying the people of Europe—men—daily, hourly, and this had been going on for hundreds of years.

Their preachers stood in the pulpits and preached: "What does it serve a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Was it possible? Their whole course of conduct had but one goal: that of gaining the world and letting the souls go to hell!

Terrifying bewilderment of intellect! Who encouraged this? Who profited by it? The ruling and capitalistic classes.

The people themselves, they were the deceived, deceived by an artificial and devilishly clever system.

In the late autumn of 1914—he remembered it quite distinctly—the two fronts began to fraternize. They got together—chatted, exchanged trifles, these miserable trifles of

the European slaves—and quite involuntarily a longing for comradeship and love began to germinate in the breasts of the simple soldiers. An assembly of common soldiers would have concluded peace within three days' time. The powerful tolerated this—but the moment they felt that reserves and munitions were guaranteed, they commanded their European slaves to commence tearing each other to pieces again.

Black-white-red, blue-white-red, the Union Jack—the colors of the robber barons floated out on the breeze and these the white slaves worshiped.

Darkness—gloom, no way out. . . .

Man trembled before man. Was it possible? Ackermann had seen prisoners who had begged for their lives on their knees. . . . What had happened to the world?

He covered his face in shame.

Terrible years, terrible days—each day more terrible than the preceding one!

And no way out!—No!

On rolled the avalanche set in motion by brains long moldering in their graves. On it rolled, destroying countries, cities, generations.

Europe was like a festering wound poisoning the face of the earth. It often seemed to Ackermann as if God had turned His face away. You are now receiving your just deserts—slaughter each other. . . . Howitzers, mortars, gases, air bombs—disappear—quickly, quickly, vanish . . .

Then suddenly—a light began to shine out of the East . . .

Since the Somme battles Ackermann had not been fit for active service. He limped and was subject to spells of unconsciousness. He was detailed to a prisoners' camp as a guard. Here he made friends with the prisoners and endeavored to enlighten his comrades. He was accused of "pacifistic activities" and only escaped imprisonment by a hair's breadth. And indeed only for the reason that at this

time the prisons were all overcrowded. He was summarily sent back to his regiment and his regiment detailed him to Berlin where there was need for thousands of clerks and orderlies in the innumerable war bureaus.

Here, in a soup kitchen, he met—Ruth!

Then he remembered: it was in a hospital in Cambrai. He had been brought there one evening and in the night he awoke—to his intense astonishment—in a hospital ward. On this day he had sought death—better to be killed than to kill. He had been thrown to the ground by a hand grenade.

Here he lay in a half-darkened ward. French, English, Canadians, colored troops, here they were all united. In the adjoining bed was a negro whose underjaw had been shot away, gasping out of a bloody roll of cotton bandaging. Groans, whimpering, spitting, indistinct babbling. As was the case in all hospitals, so also in this ward was to be found the same incomprehensible resignation. All those lying here felt that it was fate, against which all resistance was futile. The battle had taken place, because it must be so, they had been wounded, because it must be so, and they would die, if it had been so ordained.

He also had succumbed to this same enigmatic resignation, familiar to every wounded man who wakes to find himself in a hospital.

Then—suddenly—he saw a figure, a little figure, a nurse. She stood with her face against the wall, a ray of light rested upon her hair—she pressed her handkerchief against her face, her shoulders shook—she wept. He watched her for a long time. She was weeping . . .

Ruth also recognized him.

She said: "When your fever was high, you screamed the whole time—'Shoot me! The only honor that Europe has to offer is to be shot!'"

"Did I say that?"

"Yes, and you said a lot of other things. You said many things that had long slumbered in my own mind."

"You—? But then you are the daughter of a General?"

"Yes!—but what's that to do with it?"

And so they became friends.

9.

See there, a man! He stands leaning against a house weeping! Suddenly the house begins to give way—would any one believe it possible—a four-storied house to give way from the pressure of a narrow back? It continues to give way, and the man falls full length on the ground. His silk hat rolls, rolls away into endless space.

Children come running up. A silk hat! They play football with it. What roars of laughter! But children, even they, have compassion, not for the little old man, but for the hat.

A little boy brings it back. The little old man fishes around in his pocket until he finds a coin—but suddenly he runs in a perfectly unintelligible curve across the street and straight into a cab-horse that has the greatest difficulty in standing on its own legs. The whip flies through the air. And the children scream with delight.

Herr Herbst lay in his bed and panted in semisleep. Night, darkness, he had no desire to awaken. How long had he been gone, where had he drunk, how long had he slept? He did not know, nor did he wish to know. Only sleep. Shame, humiliation, nothing but humiliation so soon as he awakened.

Voices could be heard on the other side of the wall, sibilant whispers. Haehnlein's step passing to and fro, just as it did every night. How long will they be able to bear it? thought Herr Herbst in his little bed. Not very long? He listened to the hissing, whispering voices and regaled himself with the misery of others in order to forget his own despair.

Haehnlein called upon God to witness that not even a



dog could longer endure this sort of a life. He had served, served, always served, twice wounded in three years and his wife sewing herself blind. And his wife coughed until the walls were spattered with blood. And while he served, his family was starving at home. Bedded upon newspapers, his wife had given birth to a child, lying forsaken, helpless, like an animal in a corner. Not a drop of milk, not a plate of soup, nothing. Was that justice? Was such a thing conceivable? To be sure, she had a milk-card, but no milk, such was the state of affairs! And the children, three and four years old, they could not even walk, their bones were so crooked and their skulls so weak. What kind of a world is this? But the little pewter jugs, those had to be handed out, otherwise they would have been arrested. And the children slept on newspapers and rags. What had the world come to? Were we still on earth or in hell!

No, not much longer!

Haehnlein's hoarse voice trailed off in the distance, Herr Herbst gurgled more deeply, more evenly; sleep was returning.

Then he saw—in hazy contour—the frightful tumultuous waves of frozen dirt, with the shattered trunks of trees, and the narrow trenches which lost themselves between the waves of dirt.

He groaned and turned over on his other side.

But here they were also, these terrible waves of dirt. But—just look there!—they were no longer rigid, they stirred, they moved. Clods of earth raised themselves in the air—backs, arms, hands, legs became discernible—in hazy contour—what was that? Take a closer look and you will recognize what it is! Yes,—men! Distinctly to be seen, clay-covered soldiers, who had been buried by the mountains of loam and were endeavoring mutely and desperately to work their way out.

He groaned and sat straight up in bed. Then he saw Robert before his eyes, Robert wearing a ragged mountain

of loam on his back—a load that pressed him to the ground.

"I can bear it no longer!" cried Haehnlein at this moment.

"For Christ's sake!" whimpered the woman and coughed.

Robert had vanished. Darkness, night, there the window, the room was empty.

Herr Herbst wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Ignominy, nothing but ignominy . . ."

He crawled under the cover and now a deep sleep fell upon him . . .

Late the same evening, it was near midnight, the General came home from Dora's. He hummed good-naturedly. As usual Dora's levity had cheered him up. The walk through the night air had also done him good.

The good spirits of this woman always had the effect of a cold bath upon him! Marvelous—her laugh—she took nothing seriously, an artistic temperament, a philosopher! We men, on the other hand . . .

Yes, Dora was the only one who understood how to enjoy life, one could, indeed, learn from her—even though she were only a woman, yes, indeed . . .

But scarcely had the light been turned on in his study than the painful scene of the afternoon came back to him and instantly his good spirits vanished.

That scornful laugh, the scornful look of the little crazy man, seemed to be floating about somewhere in the room. "I know," said the scornful smile on the thin lips, "I know, but I shall not talk about it." As it had done this afternoon, the livid little face had nestled down on one shoulder, so that one eye was larger than the other, and from this larger eye blinked scorn and derision.

The General was filled with unrest.

No, there was no doubt of it, this little crazy man was in possession of some secret which had to do with Ruth. The expression of his eyes was not to be misunderstood.

Possibly a secret that could compromise the entire family. At this moment his daughter was completely unintelligible to him, an enigma, stranger than the greatest stranger whom he had ever met in his life.

To-morrow he would have a serious conversation with Ruth. Her willfulness betrayed a regrettable lack of consideration for the family of the Hecht-Babengbergs. It was impossible to imagine a union that would have added more to the prestige of the family, both socially and materially, than this marriage with Dietz, who, moreover, had a brilliant career ahead of him. Was it not surprising—the war seemed to have shaken the very foundations of the social structure? On all hands the same symptoms—*mésalliances*, matrimonial troubles, divorces—Colonel Eulendorf, for example, comes home and finds—scandalous! Bredow's son, secretly married; he falls; suddenly his widow is heard from; a wholly unknown person, formerly an actress, makes claims upon his family. In the Rheinsberg family alone, two divorces within a short time.

Yes, surprising. Hundreds of examples occurred to him—in his immediate circle of friends and acquaintances. Terrifying symptoms of disintegration. Was this generation not ripe for the greatness of the period?

No longer tolerate the thing, no, no, to-morrow, at the very first opportunity I intend to have a talk with her.

And this old man? Let him have his little secret! Nothing easier than to get hold of information, all desirable information.

Once before—some years ago—he had . . .

The General got ready to go to bed. Thoughtfully he looked at his hands, his face, every wrinkle.

More action—and everything would be all right!

He slept.

Heavy fighting! Uncommonly heavy fighting! In the middle of the night, Herr Herbst sat suddenly up in bed,

and with a grating, self-complacent voice said: "Heavy fighting, uncommonly heavy fighting!"

Just wait, you pompous ass! Just you wait! Take care—an old man—but just take care—!

Then he sank down in bed, unconscious, rolled together like a little bundle of rags.

In the afternoon the sun shone into the room, but still the little bundle of rags lay motionless on the bed. Not until evening did it begin to grow restless. The hands pulled at the coverlid and drew it up close about his face. The sleeper was cold. Cold, a terrible cold breathed from the mountain that he had seen. A stream of ice. Night, winter! And he kneeled before this mountain, stretching out his hands. Now it seemed to grow brighter, day dawned, the sun seemed about to rise. The mountain began gradually to glow, it glowed red, nothing but granite, torn and jagged, weather-beaten.

But suddenly the stone walls, the gigantic blocks of granite, began to shift—the mountain of stone was transformed into a human face.

The sleeper quivered. He felt distinctly that he would soon emerge from unconsciousness. If he only raised himself a tiny bit higher, he would come in contact with the heavy, heavy layer of shame and humiliation which rested upon him. Too late! It sank down upon him, this heavy layer of shame, touched him, forced him to the ground.

There! He was awake. The merciful intoxication had vanished. And there it was again . . .

He sat there stunned. It was growing dark.

Shame, nothing but shame!

He had been humiliated, crushed, thrown to the ground and stepped upon. Heavy fighting—uncommonly heavy fighting—thousands, hundreds of thousands—yes, some one had offered him a chair, had shown him a photograph—in spite of everything! Wherein, then, lay the disgrace, yes, wherein?

No, no, it was not alone that he had cried: "Away with you, or I'll have you carried out by force."

It was not that, no. He had behaved himself badly.

But despite that: thrown to the ground and stepped upon.

Listen! Voices. There they are, the young people—in his room! And there, there—do you not hear? The youthful voices next door buzzed loud and excitedly.

He sat up in bed and held his breath.

Pompous ass—nothing but an old man—possibly you will still live to regret it, who knows? And you—mild, pale little one—your soft eyes will know much weeping—it must be so . . .

Suddenly he grew rigid with fear. A loud despairing voice rang through the house. "Help! Help!" It was Frau Haehnlein.

The buzzing voices next door were instantly silent. A door slammed, hurrying steps could be heard. A fist beat against Haehnlein's door and Ackermann's voice was heard asking: "What's the matter?"

"Nothing, nothing, Ackermann!" answered Haehnlein with a wheezy, embarrassed laugh. "My wife was frightened. She thought—it's nothing—nothing—"

## BOOK IV

### 1.

#### ALI BABA and the Forty Thieves!

The evening of Dora's famous ball had arrived. A hollow sound came from a drum.

Hedi drew back with a little shriek. A fat negro with the expression of an orang-outang threw open the portières and, showing his white teeth, said: "Ali Baba bids thee welcome!"

"He's not going to hurt you!" said Clara, pushing Hedi forwards.

The negro's powerful naked arms and legs glistened. His thick lips were painted a bright red. Dora herself was responsible for this make-up. Another negro took the ladies' wraps. He was young and slender, lighter-colored, had a droll expression, and was good-looking. He was also bare-footed and wore only a short red and gold striped skirt.

Shrill fifes could be heard, somewhere, behind the portières.

Again one of the women guests shrieked in the vestibule. A shaggy bear pushed by Hedi, and from this covering emerged a dainty, half-naked, Nile-green Turkish woman. Countess Heller. Evening wraps of priceless old brocades, antique velvets, Japanese embroideries, former ecclesiastical garments—and from these emerged fabulous creatures: princesses, women of the harem, odalisques in silk, tulle, veils, with gold, red, and green slippers, slippers with long silver peaks and sparkling gems. From them emanated sweet scents and the fragrance of well-kept feminine bodies.

Hedi was trembling with excitement. With feverish haste

she concealed her face with her veil, as Dora's instructions required. Her eyes glistened.

Hedi was entirely draped in transparent silver veils. Her youthful bosom lay almost entirely exposed. There was nothing to speak of between her silver jacket and the wide plaited trousers. A cloud of tulle. This was Hedi's own invention!

There had been a violent scene between the two sisters that afternoon on account of this daring costume—the ladies had commenced dressing very early.

Suddenly Clara declared flatly that she would not go with Hedi if she wore it!

"What?"

"Yes, I mean it! You're completely naked! It's simply scandalous!"

What? A costume that had eaten up Hedi's allowance for six months? Hedi was mortally offended.

"But that's just what makes it Oriental," she screamed, beside herself. "What does a child like you understand about such things? And you—what on earth are you—dear me!"

"I'm a Turkish widow!"

"A widow?"

"Yes!"

"You're ridiculous, Clara, and will make me ridiculous also. This is the first time in my life I ever heard of a widow going to a ball!"

"But I'm going as one!"

"Well then, make a laughingstock of yourself!" Hedi's laugh was indignant.

"Then I'll not go at all. As it is, I haven't the slightest desire to do so!" screamed Clara and began to undress. In a rage she threw her shoes under the bed.

Hedi turned pale. "Well, then, very well, my darling. Papa will be beside himself not to find you there. But I

shall tell him about the affair you're having with the little lieutenant of the air corps—just you wait!"

She had struck Clara in a vulnerable spot. "And you!" she screamed, fixing her glistening eyes upon her sister.

"And I? What's the matter with me?"

"Just dare to say a word and I shall tell papa. I know a great deal more than you think I do!"

"What do you mean?"

"Well then, I shall tell papa that some one has given you a diamond ring? And why are you always going to the Kaiserhof?"

Now it was Hedi's turn to be beside herself.

"That's really unheard of!" she cried, in a black rage. "You know as well as I do that the ring was sent anonymously by mail. I swear—"

It was here that the sisters almost came to blows.

And now they were at the ball. There was allure in the hollow drum and Hedi's heart beat madly.

Petersen ran up and down the steps unceasingly with an umbrella. It was raining slightly.

Cab after cab rattled up the Lessing Allee towards the red brick villa. A specter of a taxi-cab, rattling along on iron tires like a tank and emitting smoke and a vile smell, also drove up.

Finally, later in the evening, an elegant gray limousine rolled up to the door, with marvelous lights that illuminated all the villas in the Lessing Allee as if by magic. And later—much later—a second shining black automobile, with a chauffeur in livery, which glided noiselessly along and left even the General's car completely in the shade.

"Ali Baba bids thee welcome!"

The General started back. Since his childhood no one had addressed him in this familiar manner. And never in his life had a negro dared speak to him.

This little Dora, she certainly had droll ideas!



## 2.

Hedi's heart was beating with intense excitement.

"Love, sweetest of all princesses—"

A hollow-sounding drum and shrill fifes. Red, green, yellow lamps of gigantic size, tents, divans. The musicians wore scarlet turbans and verdigris-colored masks with long fringes. They crouched on a divan in the corner.

Already there was a great crowd in Ali Baba's robber cave.

A peculiar reed instrument gave forth a hideous sound, from a bronze tripod ascended a suffocating cloud of sweet essence. The two half-naked negroes passed around refreshments.

"Love, my little princess—yes, as banal as it sounds, love is a confidence game Nature plays upon us, an illusion between two fools—"

"Ah!"

"Just as marriage is a confidence game, an illusion of a mass of fools!"

"Then you do not believe in love?"

"No, no, I believe only in—"

"Well?"

"May I whisper it in your ear?"

This highly intelligent conversation was being carried on between Hedi, the princess in silver veils, and a wild-looking robber with his face swathed in a bright-green perforated burnous.

They crouched side by side on a divan with their legs crossed in prescribed fashion. The robber put his mouth quite close to the ear of the princess, who instantly sprang back as the robber whispered his confession of faith into her ear.

"Fie! How horrid of you!"

"And so you're another one not strong enough to listen

to the truth?" The swathed head was shaken sadly and reproachfully.

Just then a ragged beggar monk holding out a bowl, made of a hollow cocoanut-shell which he wore attached to his wrist by a slender golden chain, bowed before Hedi. The beggar monk was entirely wrapped in pieces of cloth of a peculiar disagreeable dirty yellow and looked just like a mummy. Even his arms. He wore an orange red turban, laced with thick green cords. His eyes were dazzling.

"Who are you?" asked Hedi, and threw a cigarette into the bowl. Her heart stopped beating.

The beggar monk lifted the bowl to his forehead and bowed low. Again his eyes dazzled her.

"Who is he?"

"I don't know him. Thank God that all faces here to-night are covered. What a splendid idea! How much life would gain thereby!"

Hedi looked into the small twinkling eyes of the robber, which were like glistening drops of tar. Who was he, always at her heels and not to be shaken off? His audacity pleased her, also the nonsense that he talked. A big diamond with a yellowish fire sparkled on his short-fingered, well-manicured hand.

A glow was already running through Hedi's veins. Yes, to-night, this very night, it must happen, it must happen! What must happen, what must be? That she did not know herself.

The sound of the wood instruments stupefied Hedi's senses.

"Stop, a moment, my estimable friend!"

Professor Salomon pushed his way rapidly between two naked backs, one hot, red, with large pores, and the other cool, smooth, somewhat angular, ivory-colored, with bewildering little raven black hairs on it. He moved rapidly

and cautiously in order not to get grease stains from the powder on his evening coat. The Professor, despite Dora's command, was in evening clothes. He found it undignified to drape one's self with colored rags. But he wore the rosette of the Iron Cross in his buttonhole.

He had just espied an acquaintance who was wiping his eye with the corner of his handkerchief. The feather of a elaborate headdress had punched him in the eye. It was a most lucky chance, as the acquaintance was a noted petticoat chaser and would otherwise have been difficult to get hold of.

The Professor's fat pumpkin face fairly beamed. Unfortunately it must be said that the Professor's skull, with its large protruding ears, resembled a half-ripe, somewhat yellowish pumpkin. Professor Salomon, charter member of the Society for the Rapid Annihilation of England's World Tyranny, President of the Barbarossa League, hitherto practically unknown, had attained a certain sort of celebrity during the war. It was in his pumpkin head that had been evolved the economic principles which the navy needed as an excuse for unrestricted submarine warfare. Professor Salomon had performed his task to the complete satisfaction of the Admiralty. At present he occupied one of the most influential posts in the Foreign Office.

"Important news," cried the shining pumpkin. "Science triumphs—despite all the doubts of our Anglomaniacs!"

The Persian, whose costume was sewn with brilliant stones, and who was one of Ali Baba's prisoners, looked at him askance out of his watery eyes. He realized that he was completely at his mercy.

"We have news that not a pound of flour is to be had in all Scotland, and that there are hunger revolts in South Wales," hissed the pumpkin.

"Is that so?" The impertinent tone changed the pumpkin's yellowish shade to one of deep scarlet.

"And you were always one of the chief doubters, always

one of them! On the basis of the most exact scientific researches, wholly reliable statistics—”

The Persian wiped the tears from his cheeks. “Oh, I don’t give a damn for statistics, my dear fellow. When I want those I consult an encyclopedia. Quite apart from—”

“Quite apart from what?”

The Professor was at the heels of the fleeing Persian.

“Quite apart from—!”

“Listen—” The Professor made one more attempt to buttonhole the vanishing acquaintance. “The English have no timber for their coal mines. The English mines are—but you are running away—?”

The Persian plunged desperately into the maelstrom of the dancers.

“Ah, ah, that’s the way you are, the way they all are!”

Already he had espied a new acquaintance. But just as he was about to catch up with him he disappeared into a whirlpool of fox-trotters.

In an humble posture, bowing unceasingly, the ragged beggar monk passed from room to room rattling his little bowl. His breast heaved excitedly and he stared at every woman. Who are you?

He passed on. His eyes penetrated behind the veils, glided over hands, ears, hips and feet.

Who are you?

Suddenly he gave a convulsive twitch. A thigh—nothing but the swaying of a thigh in dancing. . . . Without the slightest consideration for the dancers, he rushed across the floor. Noisily he rattled his bowl before a somewhat well-rounded harem favorite, who glittered with every color of the rainbow like a humming-bird.

Involuntarily the lady of the harem stopped dancing and looked straight into his eyes.

“Who are you?”

But the beggar monk only bowed mutely. Down to the earth. His broad chest heaved under his rags.

The lady of the harem laughed—no one but Dora could send forth such a pealing cascade of laughter.

"You must be dumb!"

The beggar monk nodded. But every time Dora passed he bowed and rattled his bowl, his gleaming eyes following her every step.

He had already succeeded in arousing Dora's curiosity.

### 3.

Suddenly a massive shadow fell upon the little gallery lying just above the musicians with their verdigris green masks. It emerged from the haze of smoke, the whirling turbans, feather and veils and stretched itself somberly up to the very ceiling. Then the shadow began shrinking and above the balustrade appeared a broad, earth-colored, lack-luster face and looked down at the scene below. All eyes were turned upward. The General had arrived.

The robber in the green perforated burnous nodded his swathed head at the balcony and whispered something in Hedi's ear which provoked in her an uncontrollable fit of laughter. She found her cavalier amusing beyond all measure. And any one as audacious and brazen-faced as he she had never met in her whole life!

"Come, come, he sees us! What a marvelous laugh you have!"

And of a truth, the earthy face on the balcony had raised its brows ominously.

The robber held his left hand with the yellowish diamond high in the air, as if he were taking an oath, his right touched Hedi's shoulder, and off they danced. Although he barely touched her he held her as if in a vice, unescapable. And in certain steps, he drew her close to him—as only robbers know how to do.

In the meantime Clara wandered around all by herself,

in Ali Baba's labyrinthine cave which was blazing with color. Every blow on the hollow drum seemed to go to her heart, the fifes shrilled out despair. But no sooner had the peculiar instrument with the reedy tone commenced to play than she put her hands over her ears and fled into the most remote corner.

But everywhere these mad masks were to be found, in the darkest niches. White hands and arms beckoned from every corner and passionate eyes shone from every recess. In a low-ceilinged room, meant for Ali Baba's opium den, they were crouching in droves on the rugs. The heart of the little Turkish widow knocked against the letter she had tucked in her bosom—it had just come that morning.

Suddenly she saw a pair of sorrowful eyes looking at her from one of the niches, immeasurably soft mournful eyes, and she lost herself in observing them. She extended her hands, and the apparition in the niche extended its hands also. She touched glass.

"Is it really you—Clara?" she asked, and the apparition asked the very same question.

And then a spectral greenish hand suddenly tried to touch the apparition in the mirror, and she grew frightened. But no one was there. The figure of a saint swinging a book stood near the mirror, and a ray of light shining through the floating portières had fallen upon the green hand of the saint.

Marvelous. . . . High up in the air, Heinz had seen her face floating near him in the ether. It flew along with him just as fast as his "Swallow." That was the name of his machine.

The letter burned on her heart.

"We are both young! Life lies before us—and the great future. I love you, my dearest!"

And the letter glowed.

Again she started back frightened. A man came flying through the air—head first, strangely enough in uniform,

with a dust-gray face and eyes that glittered feverishly.

"Steam Roller!" cried a chorus of affrighted voices, "His neck is broken!"

The feverish eyes were turned to the little gray widow. "You're weeping—" said the man in uniform, and then a hand went out to her convulsively.

But Clara had flown. Pushing her way between the masks, stumbling up a short flight of stairs. Suddenly she stopped; there sat the General. For him also there was neither dancing nor music. He sat there somewhat crumpled up, his gaze directed inwards.

His eyes burned somberly.

He had always found parties a bore, but to-night the gayety oppressed him. The music awakened melancholy thoughts, the gay laughter only sadness. His only reason for coming was in order not to offend Dora—and if possible to exchange a few words with a person of importance, who had accepted Dora's invitation. He had nothing but contempt for these fools who had clothed themselves in bright-colored cloths. By an effort he could understand it in the women—it was their nature—but the men—? While the roar of the guns was heralding in a new epoch of history?

Clara slipped into the hall through a narrow tapestried door. Here in the midst of old chests and presses she could breathe freely. Drums and fifes sounded far, far away. Suddenly she smiled again.

She was happier than any of them! Than all of them!

And suddenly the little gray widow found herself dancing all by herself, with sedate little steps between the old chests and presses. She had never seen the ocean nor any high mountains. Daintily she raised her tiny foot; all these she had yet to see—with him! Venice and Paris, London and cities in India—daintily she swayed her hips—all of them with you, my darling. . . .

"Weisbach? Is it you, Weisbach? Save me!" cried Captain Falk and wiped the perspiration from his ashen face. "Help me, I implore you—you find me in a terrible state!" Weisbach laughed.

"I'm bewitched, a woman has completely bewitched me. There—there—there—that's she! Do you see that sulphur-colored one, those hips. Great Heavens!"

"But that's Dora," cried Weisbach.

"Dora? Who's Dora?"

"You don't know that? Baroness von Doenhoff herself!"

"Ah, ah, well, it's all the same who it is. At any rate you see me in a state of the most terrible excitement. This woman has driven me quite mad. She came up to me, blinked her eyes, and barely touched my arm, but I can tell you—a current! At all events—something's bound to happen and something will happen!"

"Go slow, Steam Roller! Just a moment! You'd better be on your guard!"

"Be on my guard against whom, against her?"

"No, against him!"

"Him? He's at the front? In the Champagne!"

"Not at all, he's by no means at the front. He's here!"

"Here? Here?—"

Weisbach whispered something in his ear—and Falk nearly fell over in consternation.

"The devil—!"

"Hush!"

"Impossible!"

"But you'll keep still about it?"

"I'll say nothing about it. But can you beat it—I thought, I heard—a Royal Highness?"

"That was some time ago. Before the marriage."

"Aha! I understand!—But here she comes again! Just look at those hips, that movement! Farewell, Weisbach—"

"Caution!"



But Falk had already disappeared among the dancers.

The slender young negro, who had nothing on but a short red and yellow kirtle, glided about in the tent with refreshments. The eyes of the princesses, ladies of the harem and the odalisques dwelt graciously upon the handsome slave.

Hedi cooled her feverish face, she was stupefied by the sweetish fragrance of the tobacco smoke. Her cheeks glowed through her veil, her eyes gleamed like molten lead. She felt a pearl of perspiration running down her thigh, just where it was covered by the thin veil. This running drop of perspiration was like a delightful caress.

Then to her astonishment she heard Clara's voice.

Her cavalier, a stiff Bedouin reared in a cadet school, said with a bored, self-complacent voice: "The Russians attacked in six, eight rows and we waited until they had come quite near before opening our fire!"

"How terrible!" cried Clara.

"Five times the Russians attacked in this way, always in thick ranks, and we shot them to pieces. They screamed and groaned from the beating we'd given them. In the night the temperature suddenly sank and then we heard no more of them!"

"Oh, how terrible!" And Clara's voice seemed near breaking.

"And so you do not care for generals?" asked Hedi. Here in the little deserted tent room it was somewhat cooler, thank God!

"No." The green robber laughed, an audacious robber's laugh. "But I really can't say that! With their plumes, orders and knightly swords they affect me ridiculously—they are like ghosts of the Middle Ages. But unfortunately they are anything but funny. I even go as far as to say that so long as there are generals in the world, just so long will there be war!"

"You mean so long as there is war,—?"

"Not at all. I mean exactly what I said. So long as men are appointed to prepare for war and to conduct wars, so long will war be inevitable."

The robber curled himself up comfortably on the divan. He liked to talk and liked to create the impression of being clever. Hedi had long ago discovered this. But she liked him and was even willing to listen to his chatter on every possible subject. It would be wholly incorrect to assume that Hedi was only for flirting, dancing and fifty horsepower automobiles tearing away somewhere! She also cared for conversation—it was only for ennui that she hadn't the slightest use.

"Yes, unconditionally!" continued the robber emphatically. "While the world is entertaining no evil thoughts, these generals are sitting around considering how their guns can be improved. Oh, no, it is not they who do the improving! You can search through all history and not find an instance of a general having invented anything—they have their specialists to do that for them. But as soon as they think that they possess the better guns, their language becomes bolder. They assemble the great international community of gun-worshippers about them, bribe the press, overthrow ministers, who have no faith in their guns—and the disaster is complete. It is then that the generals, who have hitherto kept themselves in the background, suddenly appear in the public eye to the great astonishment of their century. From this moment on no power in the world is in a position—"

"I hear that you are not a soldier?"

Again the little gray widow passed the divan with her cavalier. The stiff Bedouin said: "—am standing on the ladder with a watch in my hand. On the minute I spring out of the trench."

"What a terrible moment that must be," said Clara.

"Oh, you get used to it. One can accustom one's self to anything, my gracious Fräulein."

The robber's gleaming dark eyes laughed at Hedi out of his swathed face. "Soldier? I was a soldier!"

"Was?"

"Yes. I'm one no longer. I'm dead."

Hedi went off in a peal of laughter.

"Yes, I'm dead, my beautiful mask," continued the robber. "I died in a hospital in Warsaw. My burial cost me a thousand marks. The color-sergeant struck my name from the muster-roll of the regiment. I no longer exist. Alongside my name is written: Died of typhus—"

Now how Hedi could laugh!

"How splendid—how marvelous!" She could not get over it.

"What a marvelous idea. He's dead! Who are you anyway? Do I know you?"

"We've seen each other several times at the Kaiserhof!"

Aha! That he had been able to keep up the deception so long! It was Stroebel.

#### 4.

Suddenly the General arose. He caught hold of the railing of the low balustrade. Had not the gallery just swayed as if shaken by an earthquake? The music died away, the ballroom was empty, a whirling nothing!

An inexplicable sensation of being forsaken caused his breast to contract. A totally foreign world, inexplicable! But suddenly he was animated by a desire to move about among these strange, inexplicable people, who concealed their identity under gay-colored stuffs and laughed. A few words, Dora, to exchange a few words with her!

Cautiously feeling his way, he descended the worm-eaten rococo stairway which fairly creaked under the weight of his massive body. By this time it was as good as settled that a certain highly-placed personage with whom he would gladly have exchanged a few words did not intend to honor

the fête by his presence. The General frankly regretted this. That highly-placed personage was no other than the brother of Countess Heller, whose name one only dared speak in whispers. The General had welcomed the opportunity of being brought within the horizon of a personage who had the ear of the All-Highest and in whose hands lay the fate of so many persons. No, he was obliged to admit it; he had been forgotten, completely forgotten.

At the foot of the stairs the General stopped. His bright gray eyes took in the scene. The broad, earth-colored face twitched from the effort it was making to unbend its rigid mien. This attempt was unsuccessful. This care-free, gay crowd did not succeed in awakening a sympathetic chord in his breast, and even Dora's smile, flashed at him every time she passed, aroused nothing more than a fleeting warmth in his heart.

No, strange, incomprehensible!

He passed on into the dining-room, drank a glass of champagne, and ate a sandwich, with a bored expression.

The refreshment room was almost empty. One of the masks was teaching a new tango step to his veiled companion, with the most serious mien in the world. A black broadcloth back pushed its way, almost reverently, along the buffet, stopping at each dish.

This reverent black broadcloth back belonged to Privy Councillor Westphal, who was completely hypnotized by the sight of all these heaped-up delicacies. Throughout the entire war he had meticulously observed the food laws and regulations. It had already become difficult for him to walk upstairs, his memory was vanishing, and out of sheer weakness he slept away the greater part of his time at the foreign office, slept, slept, but observed the regulations, for after all he belonged in a way to the government by whom they were issued. And here all at once, was it possible? here were whole hams, think of it! Here were roasts a yard long, think of it! The fat dripped from the dishes,

there were sardines, where did they come from? And God Almighty, even tropical fruits although they all had been confiscated. Every kind of cake, large and small, just as they were in a pastry-shop before the war. Here was butter and six kinds of cheese. The Privy Councillor had abandoned himself to the delight of masticating. He ate, taking here a little piece of smoked salmon, there the upper joint of a turkey, then a piece of meat in aspic jelly, and farther on a thin slice of raw ham. And also a piece of goose, cut from the breast, with the "pope's nose" attached, there! For two years he had not eaten to repletion. He nibbled on a radish, and as has been said, still had the entire row of cakes and cheese dishes to choose from. With a devotional mien he pushed his way along the buffet, satiating his spectacled eyes upon the sight of all this splendor.

Suddenly, however, his glasses reflected the sparkle of decorations, embroideries and the red of the General Staff and he started back.

"Herr General!" he said, bowing and balancing his plate very cleverly in his hand.

The General made a cool movement of the head and grumbled something down in his throat. There was nothing he disliked more than obtrusiveness.

"Privy Councillor Westphal. I have already had the honor, Herr General!"

An embarrassed pause followed, which always occurred when representatives of the General Staff and members of the Foreign Office met.

The General cherished an unconquerable aversion to all Foreign Office officials, and the Privy Councillor, for his part, approached all military personages with the—most extreme caution! Frankly confessed, he distrusted them, he feared them.

"To be sure I've grown somewhat thinner," said the Privy Councillor with an apologetic smile, shoving his fingers

down between his collar and his neck. "Before the war I wore a No. 42 collar, but now I can wear a No. 38."

"Things are no better with any of us!" assured the General. "What do you think of this affair?" and the General helped himself to a salmon sandwich.

The Privy Councillor nervously plucked his scraggy Chinese mustache.

"I'm," he began, "I'm very hopeful. It is naturally difficult to say, but I regard the state of affairs in view of the military situation as—I might say—quite excellent, although it must not be overlooked—England—"

"What, please?" The General inclined his cartilaginous red ear with the little brushes of hair down to the Chinese mustache.

The Privy Councillor cracked his fingers confusedly and drew back a little. "Naturally I'm expressing only my own personal opinion. I do not know in the least—I haven't the slightest idea how the ministers judge the situation. I've not spoken to a minister for more than a year!"

"Are you speaking of the political situation?"

"I thought I understood the Herr General to—"

"I only meant to ask what you—what you thought of this affair here this evening?"

"Oh—I beg your pardon! I find it like a delicatessen shop before the war, precisely so—one might say—a sort of Utopia, ha-ha!"

*"Après nous le déluge!"* said a heavily perspiring Bedouin at this moment to a daintily veiled fairy.

The General's eyes rested reproachfully upon the Bedouin. It was just this spirit that was gnawing at the vitals of the people. At this moment he was compelled to think, with a sort of admiration, of the French Minister President, who without any ceremony simply stood all these chatterboxes and pessimists up against the wall!

But where here in Germany was the personality that was

needed to exercise this hypnosis of fear upon the people? Where, I ask you?

Just then a man in evening clothes bowed low before the General as if he were asking him for a dance. But it turned out to be only Petersen who had come to announce that His Excellency had arrived.

A faint flush rose to the General's face.

Already the high dignitary had entered the ballroom. He tripped in on Dora's arm, a senile, distraught, fixed smile upon his long-drawn smooth-shaven waxen face, his small waxen ear attentively inclined to Dora's painted lips. The star of some order glittered on his breast.

Instantly there was a lull in the revelry.

"Who is it?"

A murmur went through the hall.

"Ah—"

Quite suddenly the radiance of the highest sun of grace, in whose reflection the high dignitary passed his days according to the divine decree, was distinctly to be seen on the smooth waxen face.

"And what's that order he's wearing?"

"How old he's grown! Only his eyes are still the same!" thought Dora while she snuggled up to him as if she had been his daughter. She could risk the familiarity as he had been an intimate of the house—in those days! He knew everything. But at that time he was not yet Excellency, at that time he was called Franz the First by his friends, and the women who knew him intimately called him simply Franz. She also called him that. "What's happened to him? A ruin!"

But Dora beamed.

The visit of this high personage awakened memories in her of that time—of those days—when all the world raved about her and carried her about on its hands, when men vied with each other to please her, when day after day, as if by a magic hand, her vases and bowls were filled with the most

beautiful flowers. And suddenly the present fête seemed to her to be a continuation of the brilliant ones of those days. Again she wore a dozen costumes during the evening, again she was continually being discovered anew and admired anew. Again she was surrounded by a swarm of adorers. There was this Captain, with the droll name of Steam Roller—hopelessly in love with her! There was this queer unknown with the rattling bowl who dogged her steps, and there were others who whispered words in her ears, who suddenly during the dance . . . and that jealous eye watching over her, just as in those days.

“Here he is!” cried Dora’s clear voice and she passed the high dignitary over to the General on the gallery.

## 5.

The General arose with every token of a carefully suppressed but most delightful surprise.

How old he’s grown, was also his first thought. And one eyebrow is completely gone. A wax figure! He bowed low. The order which sparkled on the shirt-front of His Excellency outweighed many times all the orders which the General wore strung across his breast.

The wearer of the high order stretched out both hands to the General and whispered, “My dear old friend, I am delighted to see you again, extraordinarily delighted to have an opportunity.”

The chair was in readiness and the General waited quite punctiliously until the high dignitary had seated himself, until he was settled in his chair. It was not until then that the General presumed to seat himself by his side.

“Delighted, uncommonly delighted. I’m somewhat late . . . a dinner.”

Petersen appeared at the back of His Excellency’s chair.

“Nothing, thank you—but wait a moment, my friend, you may bring me a glass of water, if you please.”



"It gives me the greatest pleasure to see Your Excellency looking so well," cried the General.

"With the exception of my old bowel trouble, my friend."

The conversation was carried on in a loud tone, as the high dignitary was deaf and every one knew that he never admitted this and never asked you to repeat. It was even said that he presided over the most weighty conferences without understanding a single word and then invented his own report of the proceedings. The General's voice sounded like a trumpet, he wished the high dignitary to hear every word he said. How cleverly Dora had arranged this meeting. Possibly this opportunity of bringing himself again to mind would never occur again.

"Between the battles," said His Excellency, smiling and pointing to the turbans, nodding plumes and billows of naked flesh down below.

"Your Excellency's remark is very pertinent. They're chiefly officers who are here on leave, to take a long breath before returning to the front to-morrow."

"Yes, yes, yes!"

"Your Excellency—"

The influential personage laid his little soft hand on the General's knee and said: "Dear friend, permit me to ask you to drop all ceremony. We are still old friends. Yes, how long is it since we have known each other?"

"It is," the General considered, "it must be about thirty years."

"Thirty years!" The high dignitary moved about uneasily in his chair, swayed his waxen head and laughed mirthlessly. "A generation! I remember quite distinctly that we were once at the same ball in Berlin. It was—now where was that ball?"

The General flushed. The other would unquestionably recall that affair, that abduction, and everything would be lost.

"I don't remember," he said.

But with the obstinacy of old age the high dignitary began fishing in the clouded pools of memory.

"It was at the home of Baron Kress," he cried. "Yes, now I have it and there was a charming young woman there, a fascinating little person. Ah, ah, ah, what was her name?"

The General maintained a persistent silence.

The situation was extremely painful to him. He was overwhelmed with shame at not being able to muster up sufficient courage to confess that this charming little person, as His Excellency was pleased to call her, later—

"Was it not a little Baroness Bassewitz? No, no, it was—well, how long ago was it? I was not born for marriage, my friend. And how do you like it in Berlin?"

The General moved uneasily in his chair. "Where my king places me," he bawled into the ear of His Excellency, "there—" He came to a lame halt.

But the old man understood him perfectly.

"Yes, yes, yes," he nodded. Ah, he had heard this phrase at least a thousand times in his life. He patted himself on the mouth to conceal a yawn.

"I hear, however, that you prefer to be at the front, dear friend? My sister—"

"I fulfill my duty and do not complain," hastily assured the General. "However, it's quite natural that a front soldier—"

"Yes, yes, yes—quite natural, quite natural!"

The high dignitary seemed lost in thought, he half closed his large senile eyes, and for a time it looked as if he were going to sleep. But suddenly he remembered that not long ago, at a lunch table, some one had spoken to him about this Hecht-Babenberg. He had failed to do something, or better, hadn't succeeded in doing something at the front—and there was talk of an investigation that was still pending. Naturally was pending—such investigations were always pending and so there was nothing unusual in that.

Otherwise the prestige of the army would suffer. He

remembered this and he tortured his old pointed head to recall just what the General's misfortune had been. It had something to do with a hill—with one of those many hills which were always being talked about. He was not an army man and the front meant nothing to him but a more or less straight blue line, which he saw everywhere on the map in the conference rooms.

He no longer read the communiqués, not for a long time had he read them—several years—they always contained the names of the same places. Quite frankly, he was not interested in the front, he was one of the laity as far as military matters were concerned, they did not belong to his department. But he was sure that it had something to do with a hill, a hill, but after all, what did it matter what hill it was! Ahem! It would be, well—in view of this bad luck—not so easy . . .

Suddenly his face lit up with a smile. There below—how charming—a pair had just kissed during the dance, wholly sans gêne! The young people of to-day—again he moved about uneasily on his chair.

But the General took the liberty of reminding him that there was important work to be done here in Berlin as well. There were certain influences at work, pacifistic, Jewish-Liberal, religious-social influences, which had to be fought. The will of the entire nation must be concentrated and directed towards a final gigantic effort. "Gigantic, gigantic!" screamed the General into the waxen ear of His Excellency who was listening with his head inclined.

"Yes, yes—quite true—quite so!"

Then the General utilized the opportunity of setting forth to the high dignitary his military-political views in general.

The Peipus Lake, the road to India by way of the Caucasus, the crushing of England, beginning in the Orient, a corridor through Turkey and Egypt to a powerful German Central Africa, raw material reservoir, colonization territory, maritime bases . . .

"Very interesting—quite so—"

The General explained his position fluently. These ideas formed the theme of a lecture, already worked out, which he was to deliver within the next few days at a meeting of the Barbarossa League.

The high dignitary nodded and squinted through the carved railing of the gallery down into the ballroom. It would have been far more agreeable to him had the General discussed these little legs, hips and faces—these modern dances were very alluring even if they were somewhat daring. Everything that the General was saying, he heard every day from the military. The only new idea was that of the corridor through Egypt. That was indeed a new variant.

"Quite so—very true—" he said and nodded.

And this Captain who had just danced with Dora, did he not look as if he were—rather tipsy! Marvelous, this effervescing vitality. . . .

Dora gave up trying to dance with Captain Falk.

"I am thirsty, Steam Roller."

Was there any request in the wide world which the Captain would have fulfilled with greater delight? Not one. He wanted to lay all the vintages of the last three years at Dora's feet, he vowed that if it became necessary he would raid the wine cellars of all the millionaires in the neighborhood.

"Wine—here, you black ruffian!" he cried to the fat negro.

He emptied his glass to the health of his lady and then tossed it—just like that!—into the center of the orchestra.

That was his style.

"Play, you pigs!" he cried, and when the musicians looked around enraged, he added with a deep bow, pointing to Dora: "For my lady!"

Then he took a piece of blue paper from his pocket, rolled it together into a ball, spit on it and threw it at the

musicians. That also was his style. Now it was the turn of the musicians to bow.

The Captain had reached Berlin barely five hours ago, and, as usual, was stopping with Stroebel. Early yesterday morning, at seven o'clock, he had stormed a trench on the Flemish coast, using his knife freely; to-day he was dancing at Dora's party—it was a war with every possible comfort, as he said—to-morrow evening, at ten, his train left. It was possible that day after to-morrow he would again be using his knife—all the same to him!

"And now another glass to the health of these little hairs here on your neck!" Yes, the world has another aspect when seen through a glass of champagne.

Dora found him irresistibly droll. "Why do you drink so frightfully much, Steam Roller?"

The Captain assured her that he was a volcano, figuratively speaking, and he was endeavoring to keep his temperature down. And moreover, these little hairs on her neck had driven him mad—and the lobe of her ear and several other things. And anyway he was nothing but a poor front-pig, to be pitied—scarcely twenty-four hours leave.

Suddenly he threw his arms about Dora, who fled.

Already the bowl could be heard rattling and a pale arm was stretched out to ward off the Captain.

"Whew! Here he is again. An uncanny mate!"

"Just say the word, gracious lady, and we will murder him. Away with you, slave!" cried the Captain, with a good-natured laugh.

But all of a sudden the beggar began to grow—he grew and his eyes flashed. . . .

"Is it you?"

Hedi plucked at the monk's sleeve. Her heart beat wildly.

The gleaming eyes between the folds of his habit drew together until only a small slit was visible like the eyes of

an owl. The beggar monk drew back and bowed, still rattling his little bowl.

"Is it you? Speak!"

Silence.

"Do you know my voice?"

The beggar monk shook his head.

"Show me your left hand!"

The beggar monk hid both hands under his rags and bowed more humbly than ever, down to the very ground.

A woman whispered something into Hedi's ear: "It is a royal personage."

"Who?"

"So they say." Hedi drew back shyly.

"I'm of the opinion," screamed the General into the little waxen ear, "that only a single, gigantic effort of the German people is needed and we will then be able to dictate peace."

The high dignitary rocked his pointed head.

"It's possible," he interrupted the General, "that this effort will not be necessary. This, I beg you, quite between ourselves! Yes, it's possible that they already have enough!" Suddenly the high dignitary became mysterious. But at all events—he passed his days in the immediate entourage of the all-highest personages.

"I beg your pardon!"

"Possible, for all that, possible! There are distinct signs of this. England . . . but I beg of you, quite between ourselves!"

Quite unexpectedly he arose. "Extremely delighted, my dear friend—quite extraordinarily so. Very interesting—your arguments, very interesting. I beg of you not to disturb yourself—"

He had only come in for a few moments, in the first place to give pleasure to this superb Dora, in the second place to please his sister, and in the third place—well, there was no third!

Cautiously, the bumpy bald head wound its way down the narrow steps, to which even to-day the odor of incense clung.

The high dignitary crawled into his black limousine and drew a fur cap over his bald head.

"Great ability, unquestionably!" he said to himself, as he leaned back among the cushions. "But why do all the army men scream so loud? He almost deafened me!"

In a moment he was asleep, while the limousine glided noiselessly through the darkness.

## 6.

Scarcely had the high dignitary taken his departure than the revelry started afresh. The highly-placed personage up there, with the General at his side, had put somewhat of a damper upon the boisterousness. There were many who found it embarrassing to have so high a dignitary overhear their nonsense. Even the General was a restraining influence, without being conscious of it, and every one was wishing that he would vanish as quickly as possible.

The new orchestra had just arrived. Gypsies, who until then had been playing in a bar. It was the best orchestra in Berlin, and the dancers immediately became aware of the change.

Suddenly a gong sounded, loud and rumbling, and in a trice all the lights were extinguished with the exception of a few candles. A small lighted stage, before which hung a phosphorous-green curtain, shone in the background. The curtains parted. A hand appeared, a naked arm, a shoulder, glistening like ivory. A slender dancer stepped into view.

All the turbans, pearl necklaces and nodding plumes suddenly bowed to the ground.

The dancer was a marvelous creature, with a superb body

and small youthful breasts. She was completely naked save that about the hips she wore a string of blue stones and a wisp of tulle.

With every step she detached herself more and more from the darkness, until gradually her figure seemed to dive into the light, at first only a suggestion of flesh and splendor, which soon became a bewildering reality.

The dancer stepped forward like a somnambulist, her eyes fixed upon some remote vision. Her hands, with their dainty transparent fingers, were laid upon her youthful breasts. For a time she stood perfectly motionless. Then—at a certain musical phrase—she slowly raised her left foot and began writhing her hips.

Just at this moment a clock began to strike. It was so still in the house that the rumbling, rattling strokes could be distinctly heard.

"That stupid clock!" said Dora half aloud and angrily.

The music stopped, the dancer stood still, the dainty fingers pressed lightly to her breasts, motionless, with her head bent slightly forward, waiting for the clock to cease.

On the same evening, at precisely the same hour, Captain von Doenhoff, sitting in the half-wrecked cellar of a little village in the Champagne where he was quartered, was informed that the conveyance he had ordered was outside. In this wagon the corpse of his adjutant, who had fallen while on observation duty, was to be transported back of the lines. Doenhoff had ordered the wagon for midnight because at that hour the enemy's fire usually abated somewhat. All that was left of the village was a heap of ruins. But contrary to expectation, the night had not brought the anticipated respite. The guns were roaring and Doenhoff's battery was firing at top speed. The cellar, in which the battery officers were assembled around the coffin of their dead comrade, was incessantly shaken by the heavy concus-



sions of the howitzers. A ruined barn nearby had been struck and the débris smoldered; a corroding smoke penetrated into the cellar.

At the stroke of midnight the coffin was carried out by the men of the battery squad and laid upon the hay-wagon. Thereupon the officers left the cellar to give their fallen comrade the last escort.

The air was mild but heavy with the corroding smoke of the smoldering barn. The heavens were lighted up incessantly by the tracery of ghostly flashes that sped from horizon to horizon. The mourning comrades could be quite distinctly discerned, even to the tears in their eyes. The guns roared madly, and the discharges from the batteries which kept the enemy's approaches under fire kept up a furious crashing. The shells hissed over their heads and sped on into the night.

Off to the south, back of the enemy's lines, a mountain was spewing fire. A blood-red globe of fire ascended to the black skies which hung, sinister and foreboding: some camp or other over there was on fire.

It was only when the howitzers in the vicinity flung their sheaves of fire into the night that the volcano for the moment had a more pallid gleam. Light signals in all colors, like spectral hands, flashed incessantly along the front lines. Now they crawled low on the ground, now shot up like rockets and coruscated in the air. They were like beacon lights of hell sent up to guide the death-ships.

The light of a lantern wandered around the wagon, the flanks of the sturdy battery horses glistened, the coffin seemed to elongate in the flashes of the battery discharges. On the driver's seat crouched a shadow, from whose mouth issued sparks.

Captain von Doenhoff was filled with grim satisfaction by the rapid fire of his battery. Give it to them like the devil! / Revenge for Kammerer! The glowing volcano off to the south also gratified him.

The enemy, excited, was trying its best to locate the Doenhoff battery. All around fell the flaming shells.

"They have lighted a regular funeral torch for poor old Kammerer," he said, and his voice sounded cruelly triumphant.

The shadows of the officers turned their heads to the south. "A magazine is burning!" A horse neighed restlessly.

"Comrades," suddenly screamed Doenhoff, with a voice which he purposely made loud and sharp. He was trying to have the scene over with as quickly as possible, in order to conceal the grief he felt at the loss of Kammerer, with whom he had been living out here for three years.

"Comrades, Kammerer is leaving us. He was a brave and efficient fellow. Drive on! Farewell, Kammerer!"

Doenhoff put his hand to his cap and the officers did likewise. The little lantern crawled over the wheel and took its place by the driver, throwing its light upon the long wooden box.

At that moment the air was filled with a mighty roaring, a hollow sucking sound came nearer, and the next moment a dazzling light shot up towards the black heavens. With his arm pressed against his eyes, Doenhoff tumbled backwards into the cellar. He did not even hear the noise of the explosion.

Vanished was the wagon, the driver, horses, and the coffin. Vanished were the officers, nothing remained but the curling, stinking fumes from the heaps of débris left by the heavy shells. But the fire of the howitzers continued.

The clock had finished striking.

The dancer awoke from the hypnotic rigidity into which she seemed to have been plunged by the striking of the clock, her lids opened and yellow sparks flew from her eyes. She breathed again. Her dainty fingers loosened themselves from her youthful breasts, she again writhed her

hips, raised the left leg, suddenly bent until she touched the knee of her left leg with her chin—smiled ecstatically, and her ivory body glistened.

The eyes of the masks gleamed in the semi-darkness. A bullet-formed shadow with two huge ears raised itself for a moment like a ghost from the bright background. But as suddenly Professor Salomon ducked down again to the floor.

The General, still sitting in the gallery, placed his gold pince-nez to his eyes.

"You are far more beautiful!" whispered Stroebel into Hedi's ear and his lips brushed her neck. They sat close together on the floor. "It's not love—I shall not lie to you as the others do—but it's sympathy!"

## 7.

The little Turkish widow in gray had lost all of her cavaliers. Every one found her charming—but a deadly bore. At last she had the good fortune to meet an officer who was familiar with Wunderlich's fighting unit—he was stationed nearby—and he had promised to deliver greetings to Heinz. That was the only light spot in the entire evening for her. Otherwise she found it unspeakable. These women who passed half-naked from arm to arm were terrible—terrible, these men. Hedi, also—well, I see through you now, Hedi, you needn't give yourself any more trouble!

Now the little Turkish widow was sitting all by herself on a divan in the tent, her face, thoughtful and bored, supported in one hand. She would write Heinz everything, in her mind she had already begun a letter to him.

She had refused—stoutly refused—to watch that shameless person's dance. Would any one believe it possible? And it was said that she received three hundred marks for an evening and danced anywhere that she was engaged. Not for a million would the little Turkish widow, not for a million would she— Bah!

The saint swinging a book stood forsaken in the ante-room, as lonely as she. She felt sorry for him and kissed his cold green hand.

The house was completely deserted. Even the servants were crowded in the doorway, and papa also—yes, even her papa—just look! There he stood with a glass of champagne in his hand.

Clara started up the stairs—but immediately darted back. Up there, near the chests and presses, stood the beggar monk with his bowl and she was afraid to meet him alone, although he was said to be a Royal Highness. No doubt he also found this naked dancer shameless.

Salvos of applause came from the room. The music started off on a new dance.

Dora rushed by her on her way upstairs.

It was again time for her to change her costume, don't you think so?

The very best opportunity was to do so now when the new dance was just beginning.

Dora rustled along between the chests and presses. Suddenly the rattling bowl was extended to her from a dark niche—there he stood again, bowing.

She started back. But surely the humble beggar monk couldn't wish to do her any harm.

They two were entirely alone; down below could be heard the noise of revelry.

"Who are you?" asked Dora.

The beggar monk shook his red turban.

Dora came up quite close to him and gazed in his eyes, which gleamed between his mask and the red turban. For a second, a little while ago, she had thought—it frightened her—that it might possibly be—he, about whom the report was circulating. Was it not possible that he had come, unrecognized by all the guests, unrecognized even by her, to remain for an hour and then unrecognized to vanish again. It was impossible—and yet, the very thought was wonderful.

But the color of the eyes did not bear out this theory. This beggar monk had light eyes.

Suddenly the beggar monk said "Dora!"

And instantly Dora recognized the voice.

"You—?"

The beggar monk, who had remained mute the entire evening, broke out in a loud gay laugh.

"Yes, it's I."

"And I didn't recognize you! You wrote—the letter only came to-day."

"I wished to surprise you!"

Dora drew him along with her a few steps to the door. "Beloved—" she whispered.

The cloths fell from the beggar monk's face and his teeth glistened.

Suddenly he embraced her impetuously, violently.

"No, no—" she said, she implored. "Be cautious—the General—he—just looked out of the door!"

And, indeed, the General's face had been visible for a second at the little tapestried door leading to the hall. However only for a second. He had apparently not seen them.

"Let him look!"

A pearl necklace broke and pearls pattered down the stairs. With a thin crash they leaped down the steps one after the other.

"Unrest?" The General raised his brows.

"Yes, I mean the people—"

"The people—?" The General shook his head incredulously.

"I beg your pardon," answered the dandified little captain of cavalry whose face was covered with perspiration. "I mean the general public. Will you permit me, Your Excellency?"

The little captain opened the tapestry door leading from the gallery to the hall. It was hot up here in the gallery.

Incomprehensible how the General could endure it. He must have ice water in his veins. The little captain—yes, what was his name?—he belonged to one of the families of the highest aristocracy—had traveled all over the world, occupied at present a brilliant position, with the highest decorations and a dazzling career before him—the General recalled all this quite accurately, but the name, this well-known name had escaped his memory—the little captain wiped the perspiration from his brow with his handkerchief. He was dressed as a Bedouin, but had thrown back his headdress. Again perspiration issued from every pore.

"I only wished to take the liberty of remarking," he continued, "unquestionably a certain unrest is manifesting itself among the general public. In the solemn Easter message coming from the All-Highest—"

"Please do not misunderstand me. Naturally I should not presume to—criticize His Majesty's high-hearted act of grace—"

"I am all ears, Your Excellency!"

"I myself advocate electoral reforms. And in fact, I would suggest a graduated electoral franchise. Up to thirty votes."

"Thirty votes?" asked the perspiring Bedouin, endeavoring to conceal his astonishment.

"Yes, according to property holdings, ability, deserts, rank, title, culture."

"Quite so!"

"Number of children, age, social position, religion!"

"Quite so, I understand perfectly. It would be highly desirable, however, for something to happen soon. All sorts of reports are coming in to our central bureau. Groups of dissatisfied persons are being formed."

"Dissatisfied?"

"More than that, groups known to have revolutionary tendencies are being formed. Just a short time ago our attention was called to the conspiracies of certain elements!"

The General suddenly interrupted the conversation. His eye gazed restlessly through the crack in the door. His eye was wandering. He had just espied Dora. She glided by the crack in the door—but came back in a moment. And suddenly some one joined her in the hall. Just look! He, that man—now what did he represent?—this mummy, this unknown, whom he had been watching the entire evening.

“Naturally they are only a small number of hot-heads.”

“Naturally. But, at all events, the phenomenon is symptomatic.”

Without a word of excuse the General arose and looked out into the hall. This was the moment in which Dora had warned the beggar monk.

The General’s head was immediately withdrawn, when he noticed that Dora had seen him. He closed the little tapestry door.

“Symptomatic,” repeated the perspiring Bedouin. “Moreover, it is disturbing that even members of the very best society . . .”

The General’s attention had been distracted. His eye wandered restlessly over the ballroom.

“In the case to which I just alluded,” continued the little captain, “even the daughter of a general is one of the group. Her father wears a general’s uniform. It is naturally impossible for me to say more . . .”

But the General seemed to have lost complete interest in what the captain was saying. He dabbed the beads of perspiration from his brow with his handkerchief. Then he arose quickly.

“As a matter of fact,” he stammered, “it has grown unbearably hot up here. Perhaps you would like to come with me!”

And the two left the gallery.

But they suddenly stopped on the stairs. The General, in fact, even tottered back. They were dazzled by a blaze of fire. The entire ballroom suddenly seemed to be wrapped

in flames. One of the veils also caught fire and the sparks flew. The women screamed and tried to get out of the way. However, the fire lasted only a few minutes. Suddenly a captain in uniform appeared in the midst of the flames with the fat negro and together they tore down the burning curtains and stamped upon them.

All this with barely a moment's interruption of the music. The fête proceeded. Only a faint odor of fire remained.

The perspiring Bedouin had taken advantage of this opportunity to escape from the General. When the General turned around to look for him he had disappeared. It was very agreeable for the General.

With badly concealed restlessness he walked through the apartments. His eyes were searching every corner. At this late hour no one any longer took any special notice of him. He was pressed against the wall by the dancers. Once he was even obliged to stop close to the big negro's drum which Captain Falk was beating with all his might.

Professor Salomon rushed at him and spoke importantly of hunger riots in England and of the catastrophic shortage of mine props across the Channel. The miners were already refusing to go down into the mines! It was only with the greatest effort that he managed to shake off the pumpkin head. In the refreshment room he met Countess Heller, and a rather lengthy conversation with her could not be avoided. Again and again he expressed his delight at the superb appearance of her brother! Nothing was to be seen of Dora in the refreshment room.

Nor in the tent either. Here he came upon a number of spooning couples who, snuggled close to each other, had camped out on the big divan and were not in the least disturbed by his entrance.

Disgusted and half stupefied by the sultry atmosphere which filled the tent, he drew back again.

Finally he entered the music room—Ali Baba's opium den—in which red Bengal lights were burning.



Here the masks were sitting around in a circle on the rugs, clapping rhythmically while they hummed mysteriously and swayed their heads back and forth. In the midst of the red mist was dancing a slender creature with corn-colored hair, veiled in shimmering silver gauze, her breasts exposed, the body between the short jacket and the plaited trousers wholly naked. She was dancing a sort of "hootchy-kootchy," madly and with the greatest abandon.

And ah—here was Dora also! Again she had on another costume: this time of sulphur-colored silk strewn with truly terrifying cinnamon-red Chinese dragons like flames of fire.

But what had become of that other one—that mummy with the orange-red turban?

Far and wide, nothing more to be seen of him.

The dancer with the corn-colored hair tottered from exhaustion and sank to the floor with a wild shriek.

## 8.

Dora wandered restlessly through the empty rooms, restlessly back and forth. At times she threw herself on a chair—but soon she resumed her wanderings. Her sulphur-red costume with the cinnamon-red dragons floated behind her. It had slipped off one shoulder. She had taken down her heavy blonde hair because it made her head ache.

The mirage had vanished—sand—sand—desert. Day was dawning between the curtains.

Crushed flowers, torn veils, half-emptied glasses, fragments of words, laughter, fragments of music. Here and there a lamp was still burning. Petersen had taken off his livery, and, garbed in his zebra-striped blouse, was climbing up on a ladder to open a window. There was a draft. Finally the two negroes in ulsters and standing collars appeared in the doorway and bowed.

"I hope it was not too much for you!" said Dora, and

in her distraction she accompanied the two black gentlemen into the hall. "Many thanks!" And she gave them her hand.

She had a quite sincere sympathy for the two black gentlemen—quite sincere—they also were strangers here, they also belonged in a country where there were parrots, warmth, blue skies and orchids—just as she did. All three of them were strangers here.

Oh, how unhappy she was.

She sank down on a chair, then again resumed her walk—her dress slipped more and more from her shoulder. In those days, journeys, fêtes, Paris, Nice, Italy—always gayety, every day a Paradise in itself. No, she had not loved him—to tell the truth she had loved another before that, who had the most beautiful smile in the world. But it was impossible. He was poor, he had nothing at all. Impossible. Then she married this blackguard—why? Because the other women were crazy about him. He was untrue to her on their marriage day. Yes, why? Only to forget the emptiness, which had remained, after she had been torn away from—

Then, one day—what a terrible day—when she stood *vis-à-vis de rien*—literally—and debts besides. But there were friends, thank God there was a high-hearted—yes, a high-hearted friend, who did not hesitate to spend a fortune upon her.

And—now—and now? Oh—terrible!

Dora paced up and down. She puffed away at a thick cigarette and continued her pacing. The years were flying by, the summers whirled backwards, summer upon summer, spring upon spring. And this world, this monstrous world, which grew more terrible, emptier, gloomier and colder every year!

It was not the world that had changed; Dora forgot this. Since that time, when every day was a Paradise, she had grown ten years older.

But this she did not grasp.

And the day dawned gloomily.

And out there also, the day dawned, and the howitzers of the Doenhoff battery were still barking madly. The gunners were taking revenge, even if thereby they should all be shot to pieces! The shells, cruel and revengeful, bored their way through the morning mist. Just then a heavy shell landed at the mouth of the howitzer and the pieces flew.

Now firing began along the entire front and reverberated thunderously from horizon to horizon.

## PART II



## BOOK I

### 1.

**T**HE decisive hour has arrived. Fate has asked a direful question and is waiting for an answer. The wheel of world history creaks on.

Carriages arrive and automobiles dash up to the door. Brilliant sunshine. A day of unparalleled splendor.

The Reichstag, encircled by its guard of statesmen and generals cast in bronze, lies bathed in glittering sunlight. On the west gable shimmer the golden letters: **TO THE GERMAN PEOPLE!**—an inscription added only recently as an expression of the All-Highest's appreciation and good will after one and a half million men had fallen on the battlefield.

Uniforms, robes of office, embroidered collars, breasts glittering with orders, pour out of the carriages and automobiles; patent leather boots, dainty feminine footwear, gaiters, monocles. Floating beards hurry up the stone steps to the entrance of the People's Tribunal, fleshy necks, spectacles, professorial manes, all officious and important; and those men whisking up the steps with portfolios under their arms are the advocates.

Fate's direful question booms and thunders incessantly, without respite.

From time to time the porter throws out his broad chest and casts an imperious glance along the street.

An excited police officer dashes up on his wheel. A wall of blue-coats is erected. The mounted policemen sit like statues, the newspaper correspondents hasten up to the press gallery. The police officer dabs his perspiring brow with his handkerchief and quickly scrutinizes the crowd, against

whose importunities—nay, even worse—it may be necessary to defend the be-decorated breasts and shining silk hats later on.

For the present, however, but very little is to be seen of the masses. They are keeping in the background, their eyes fastened mutely on the ground. But the moment will come, perhaps very soon, when they will begin to form their line of march . . .

Only a few curious souls, far outnumbered by the police force, stand modestly drawn up against the bushes of the Tiergarten across the way, admiring the uniforms and orders; among them soldiers in field-gray and wounded men walking with canes and on crutches. Somewhere in the back of their brains—unconsciously it may be—flickers the thought that Fate has put its terrible question and is demanding an answer, to-day, now, at this very hour. But already the eye of the police officer has espied them, his brow wrinkles, and the curious begin to move on. On their canes and crutches they hobble into the Tiergarten.

But what is this? That soldier on the two short crutches, his face hanging almost down to the ground, his maimed body shaken by an incessant tremor, comes crawling out of the bushes, like some animal creeping out of the thicket. Undisturbed by the chain of policemen he crawls across the street—does it not look for all the world as if he were about to enter the Reichstag?

Just suppose that His Excellency's car should drive up at this moment? Would not the high dignitary be unpleasantly affected by the sight of the cripple, would not his thoughts be thrown into confusion? But one of the mounted police has already taken the necessary steps.

Suddenly they straighten up in their saddles; noiselessly an elegant motor rustles up.

A frail little old man alights from this elegant car, carefully and ceremoniously dressed as if for a catafalque. He blinks his eyes in the dazzling sunlight as if he had just

arisen from a vault, and trips hastily and importantly up the steps, a good-natured smile on his waxen face. The doors are thrown wide open.

Scarcely had the narrow bowed back of the old man disappeared in the doorway than the General's car dashed up to the door at racing tempo. Schwerdtfeger was out of his seat while the engine was still thundering.

With great dignity the General alighted from his car. He looked fresh and rejuvenated and there was a faint flush upon his stone face although he had slept only a few hours and then by no means soundly. He had not left Dora's fête until three o'clock. Thoughtfully he ascended the steps. The red facings of his open coat gleamed, his breast glittered with orders. He knew that this entire session of the Reichstag was nothing more than an empty ceremony, intended to emphasize to the public the undeniable fact of a constitutional governmental form. He also knew that out there the army stood ready to spring, only waiting for the signal of the telegraph operator.

To-morrow—to-morrow . . .

In vain the police lieutenant endeavored to catch the General's eye.

"Perhaps it is the best solution," thought the General, as he walked along the thick carpets of the lobby—but he was not thinking at this moment of the armies ready to roll forward like a tidal wave, but of the news that had been telephoned in just before he left the house. Very distressing news, to be sure,—but—in the last analysis it was war, one must never lose sight of that. Thousands, hundreds of thousands. . . . He regarded it as his duty to impart his news to Dora—at once, briefly and as considerately as possible. There was still a hope—albeit a very faint one—but when you come to think of it: an entire staff of officers by a single well-aimed shot! What a tremendous loss for the regiment. The signature, still lacking, would thereby now be rendered superfluous . . .



The tribunes were already crowded, shoulder to shoulder. Stars of the orders, uniforms of every description. The red of the General Staff, the gilt braid of the navy. Smiles and confidence on every freshly shaven face. Acquaintances wherever one looked. A fleshy face with elephant's ears bowed. It was, yes, quite so, that Professor Salomon—the man who had made the calculations for the navy—ah, yes, proud Albion might be defeated simply because of a lack of wooden props for her mines; insignificant things, scarcely worthy of notice, often played a decisive rôle in the history of nations and centuries. A collapsed bridge, for example, a sudden storm. Napoleon was defeated because the Russian winter set in fourteen days too early.

The meaningless ceremony had already begun. The Socialists had made several brief, highly unnecessary interpellations which were disposed of in two sentences.

"And Dora?" thought the General, endeavoring not to see Professor Salomon. "How will she bear the distressing news!"

Gradually he recalled the events of the preceding night. They seemed unreal, like fragments of a dream, which only gradually and reluctantly could be pieced together. His Excellency had seemed to follow his arguments with interest. It was only a pity that in his haste he had neglected to mention Belgium. And then suddenly something burned—what was it?—a curtain. How easily it might have developed into a serious accident in Dora's house where there was nothing but curtains and rugs. And then—that unknown mask and Dora—in the hall? Who could that man—that mummy swathed in rags—have been? And the little Captain of cavalry, that Bedouin, who perspired so dreadfully, what was his name? What astonishing things he had told him? And why? The General turned them over in his mind . . .

Suddenly a cold chill ran over his body. Somebody, somewhere in the house was staring at him. He changed his

position, smoothed his mustache and let his gaze, cold and repellent, run over the tribunes and the many-headed crowd.

Strange, he could distinctly feel the gaze of somebody fixed upon him . . .

The ministers sat on the tribune, indifferent, as if they of all persons had the least to do with this ceremony. They scribbled on their pads, exchanged joking allusions and carefully examined their finger nails. The benevolent-looking old man—meticulously groomed as if for the bier—seemed to be asleep with a peaceful smile upon his face. Suddenly, however, he coughed into his transparent childish hand and rose from his seat.

Instantly the silence of death reigned in the hall.

Loud thundered the insistent question of Fate. . . .

## . 2.

At the same hour Dora was still sleeping, a joyful smile on her flushed face.

She was enraptured by a marvelous dream; she was taking part in a Battle of Flowers in Monte Carlo or Nice—but wherever it was, it was altogether enchanting. Flower-adorned equipages passed and repassed, flowers of every color whirled against the deep blue background of the sky and fairly rained into her carriage. She sat by the side of a dignified-looking old man with a long white beard, whom she had never seen in her life before. Curiously enough, he wore an orange-colored riband obliquely across his breast, and every one seemed to regard him with curiosity and respect. Some one she knew sat in a carriage drawn by two snow-white ponies and bombarded her violently with flowers. Suddenly she recognized this person, it was Otto, she sprang up and cried: "This evening"—but the carriage had already driven on. Otto vanished in a rain of petals. "But, Helene!" said the old man with the white beard. And

thus she learned that her name was Helene. It was really quite extraordinary, and she began to laugh.

She was awakened by her own laughter, and just as she opened her eyes the last flowers and petals were raining down upon her. She was in a superb humor. The melancholy of the dawning day was wholly forgotten.

She rang for her maid. "I shall breakfast in my bath!"

Dora slipped into the tiny silken slippers, her maid threw the sky-blue bathrobe over her shoulders, and, whistling and humming, with Butzi on her arm, she passed into the bathroom. This bathroom, as has already been mentioned, was a veritable hothouse—blossoms, warmth, fragrance—and the light fell milky white and soft through the glass roof. Near the bathtub stood a little table on which was the breakfast tray, the newspapers and the post. And flowers, theater tickets and a multitude of other attentions—the table was entirely covered with them.

Dora laughed from sheer joy of living. Again the Battle of the Flowers popped into her mind. What a droll old man he was! How unspeakably funny was his orange-colored riband!

Her fête had been a complete success! All Berlin would be talking about it—about the dancer, somewhat daring to be sure, and the two negroes—yes, it all depended upon whether or not one had original ideas! An oasis in this terribly drab winter. Thank you for a wonderful evening! All had expressed their thanks, all had been happy—for a few hours. A too delicious declaration of love from that Captain Steam Roller! She had seen happy faces around her for the first time for ages, and there's no denying the fact: Dora simply could not live without pleasure. But—Dora gave a little shudder, which however did not diminish her roguish mood—how reckless she had been! The champagne—could it have been the champagne?—How easily she might have been observed!

There was nothing she loved more than an adventure, an

impromptu adventure—the sort you didn't know about a minute beforehand and often didn't remember a minute afterwards. And Dora's memory whisked with lightning-like rapidity over a long list of similar adventures, which not for anything in the world would she have forgone.

Marvelous—and no one—no one . . .

Only one, or at most, a few intimate friends . . .

Suddenly Dora took up her letters. It was not wise to dwell too long on these adventures.

A letter from the General! Lo and behold! Dora's lips curled. She laid the letter slowly to one side. This handwriting? No—it bored her at the moment, it seemed so stiff and imperious. It could wait.

She took up a rose-colored note, fastened to a bunch of lilacs. To her great surprise it was a humorous poem, a tribute from a gay group that had finished the night at Stroebel's. Dora laughed until the hothouse began to tinkle with the echoes of little bells. Ah, how drunk they must all have been!

Hedi also was one of this company that had composed the droll poem at Stroebel's house. She got home after ten o'clock that morning and just as she was slipping off what remained of the silver gauze costume Clara awoke. Dazzling spikes of light shot through the drawn curtains.

"Aha! there you are at last!" said Clara. But with what an inflection! She had last seen her sister in a circle of applauding masks, executing so shameless a dance that Clara hadn't words with which to express her contempt.

"Yes, here I am!" answered Hedi, with a peculiar soft laugh. She was very pale and her eyes wavered.

"Well, where were you, I'd like to know!" asked Clara, as she observed her sister with curiosity and astonishment.

"I?" Again Hedi laughed softly and gayly. "You left too soon. At Stroebel's. All of us drank coffee at Stroebel's. Marvelous coffee, white rolls, even cream!"

"Stroebel? Who's Stroebel?"

"He owns an automobile factory and has made millions during the war!"

"Is that so, and it was there—?"

"And do you know who made the coffee?" asked Hedi laughing. "Stroebe! and I. For Stroebe! has no servants in his house, although he's so rich, because he doesn't wish to be pried upon. And so you see we two made the coffee—and the water simply wouldn't boil, it was too funny!—but no one seemed to notice it!"

"Seemed to notice what?"

Here Hedi broke into a loud laugh. "What did I say? Well, then—no one seemed to notice that it took so much time for the water to boil. It was simply killing. The whole crowd drank cognac out of coffee cups. We all drank to 'thee and thee'!"

Hedi laughed, talked, hummed, skipped about the room, passing alternately from the shadows into the dazzling light. Soon her eyes seemed to blaze, then her corn-colored hair, then her pale skin. Suddenly she knocked a glass from the table, and that provoked another peal of laughter.

Bursting with contempt, Clara turned her face to the wall.

"And," said Hedi triumphantly, "this Herr Stroebe! is not only rich but a gentleman to boot. And he's in love with me! But I've no idea that he would even look at you, little fiancée." Hedi only added this to see if she could annoy Clara.

But Clara remained silent.

"Ah, just look, she's playing the haughty lady!" continued Hedi. "Well, I can tell you, my darling, it's quite all the same to me what you think. After all you are nothing but a child and what could you know of life? And what papa thinks, that's also quite the same to me. I've often told you that I'm sick and tired of this life, this everlasting boredom, and your turnips and potatoes. And besides that the everlasting espionage. No, dear heart, the limit has been reached. Do you hear me, little fiancée? Of course you

do, you only pretend not to. . . . I'm going to leave you. . . .

"Yes, leave you. Stroebel has offered me a position as private secretary, a thousand marks a month, with complete freedom of action—I'm to have a small office and a small salon—you're surprised, eh! From now on I shall arrange my life to suit myself. I'm young, thank God, I'm still young. And you may come to see me, little fiancée, and perhaps I'll give you a pair of silk stockings—"

Here Hedi fell off to sleep.

But her sleep was restless and every now and then a tremor ran over her whole body. Clara lay awake watching her.

What had taken place?

Life seemed to Clara suddenly to be a labyrinth, full of dark and mysterious places.

Dora was still chuckling over the poem as she took her warm bath. Her eyes, her teeth, her little dimples, her shoulders and her breasts—Dora beamed all over with ecstasy. It was so easy to give her pleasure. She was so receptive.

Carefully she laid the poem to one side, to put it away in the drawer of her desk that was dedicated to similar tributes.

A note from Otto. She stroked back her hair, read it—only two lines—then tore it into tiny pieces and threw it into the ash-tray. A faint flush came to her cheeks.

Then she drank a cup of cocoa.

After that she was ready for the General's letter. His handwriting was beginning to be shaky. It had no longer the same firm character. He was beginning to grow old, quite slowly—yes, sad! What could he have to say to her? At all events, nothing of importance.

But suddenly Dora sat quite still in her bath.

Her glistening red lips were parted, her hand trembled—she grew dizzy.

Last night . . .

And so it was last night . . .

Last night while she was dancing, while she was flirting, while she was laughing. Possibly just at the very moment . . .

Last night—the dancer, the negroes, the masks—everything was going round before her eyes.

And possibly just at the very moment . . . she shuddered.

As if stupefied she wrapped herself up in the bath towel, her gaze fixed upon the floor. Possibly he was dead already . . .

Her shining eyes, of a rare intense blue, slowly filled with tears.

But in spite of all that she hated him, even now! She could never forgive him for having been unfaithful to her on their wedding day, anything but that. The only man she had ever known who was never sentimental and never jealous. The only one who never pleaded and implored. No, by God, that he did not do. She could see the derisive look of his cold sharp eyes.

She hoped that he had not suffered much—no, no, no matter what had happened she could not bear this thought. Despite the fact that even at this moment she hated him bitterly—she didn't want him to suffer! And yet, a beastly, wicked feeling triumphed in her, quite against her will: So it's also got you! You also were torn to pieces by the shells!

Yes, this terrible thought came to Dora's mind.

She threw open the window; a day of unprecedented splendor.

Then she rang imperiously for her maid.

### 3.

"Now then, Heinz—hop off!"

Captain Wunderlich swung himself over the field on his

crutches. Reddened faces and reddened hands in the sunshine.

Instantly the noise of the guns was drowned by the roaring of the motor and soon the plane was slipping across the field towards the splendid morning. The aviation field with the hangars oscillated in broad waves under the tip of the left wing, the little machine lay the tiniest bit to one side, scarcely noticeable, just as it had yesterday. Meerheim's machine, which had got away a few minutes earlier, could be seen gleaming like a spark off to the south.

The motor had already reached top speed; unnoticeably the bottom of the aeroplane pressed against the soles of Heinz' feet. The tiny bullet-shaped cloud of the automobile, tearing along down there on the snow-white chaussée, became slower and slower; now it stood still, and now it seemed to be moving backwards.

Heinz pulled his cap down lower over his brow. He touched his talisman lightly with his fingers. At last he was off.

The colors of the ground below merged into one another. The fields and forest were like polished agates, the small pond a tiny shell of mother-of-pearl, sending out a spark now and then. Like light-colored ribbons of soft velvet, the roads and footpaths wound along the agate surface. But the landscape, this soft carpet down there, is volcanic. Little floating clouds of steam, as if issuing from a geyser, ascend uninterruptedly, now singly, now in groups—milky-white, grayish-yellow, black. At one of the curves they huddle together and puff up like steam mushrooms of rapid growth: those are the trenches.

Did he notice anything?

To-morrow, to-morrow, so it was rumored.

Heinz shouted for joy. There would be plenty to do!

Here and there in the blue dome of the heavens were to be seen serried groups of cirro-cumulus, from which shot out gleaming knife-blades; clusters of shrapnel sent up to



ward off the fliers. The vault of the sky was of an infinite blackness, flashing with myriads of the finest silver sparks.

Heinz flew up and down his sector, at a height of three thousand meters. Meerheim was patrolling the adjoining sector and now and then Heinz caught a glimpse of his machine as they approached the dividing line. Up here the front could barely be seen; a light haze hung over the ground and occasionally the girdle of geysers threw up a succession of black smoke-clouds. All around the horizon gleamed the knives of both the enemy's and the German batteries. Far and wide no plane to be seen; only once Heinz discerned a group of machines off to the west, but they soon disappeared. There seemed to be hostile fliers over in that direction and there was nothing he more passionately longed for than that they should venture over into his sector. He fairly glowed with fighting lust. But there was nothing to be seen, however closely he reconnoitered—not a soul. Great masses of white clouds floated by beneath him. At times he went down, and each time he did this a shimmering snow mountain grew rapidly under his machine. Turrets of snow foamed up to meet him, and the shadow of his machine raced away over glistening glaciers.

Heinz began to sing.

He trilled like a lark up there in the ether. He simply had to pour forth his joy. Loud and fervently he sang: "Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!" He sang every verse of the song that had fired his imagination when he was a small boy at school. At times he could distinctly hear his own bright tenor above the roaring of the motor.

Then he sang "Vöglein im Walde"!

He had never known a more blissful hour.

As was frequently the case, Clara's picture suddenly appeared before his eyes—clear and distinct. What bliss it would be to be racing along with her through the air! Never would he be able to picture this joy to her.

Yes, to-day, to-day—perhaps luck would finally favor him and he would encounter an opponent! Oh, no, he hadn't a doubt as to the outcome of the duel. He was determined, he was brave, he scoffed at danger and was inspired by a passionate love for his Fatherland. Why shouldn't he prove the superior?

There, there, already he was off on the chase . . .

Repeatedly the shrapnel clouds of the defense came quite near, but to his grief they always receded again. It was just his deuced bad luck to have no one come into his sector.

The time passed all too quickly. Again he had waited in vain. On the second Heinz turned his machine homewards. He plunged down into the midst of shimmering clouds, glided for a second through darkness and a cold mist, only to be dazzled the next moment by an enveloping brightness. Now he could see the shimmering colors of the welcoming carpet down there, and, taking his course from a white church tower, Heinz started for home!

But what's that? What's happened?

The machine began to lurch, it fluttered to and fro. The wings oscillated violently. Heinz straightened up in boundless astonishment. Could it be that the machine was . . . ?

A gigantic bird of prey raced along behind the plunging machine—an aeroplane with colored circles painted on the bottom. It plunged perpendicularly downwards in pursuit of its victim, the pilot, looking like some fearsome demon in his goggles, bent far over the side in an effort to focus his camera upon the falling machine of his opponent.

Down there the German plane was fluttering like a moth, and suddenly something that looked like a bundle—or was it a body?—detached itself from the machine and vanished, as rapidly as a bubble in the depths.

Already the knives were glistening on the edge of the forest, and the bird of prey rushed back into the clouds.

When the news was brought to Captain Wunderlich he

dug his nails into his face and shrieked: "I can't bear it any longer; I'm finished!"

## 4.

The friendly old man was still speaking—with a solemn voice. And the house was as still as death.

The kindly little old man said "Yes!" and he said "No!" He said "At once!" and he said "Never!" Discreetly and cautiously he added word to word in his artificially formed sentences. At times something like a rhetorical glamor lay over his speech: a glamor such as lies over the reliquaries in a cathedral.

In the excitement his aged cheeks were flushed like those of a child.

He was not disinclined to make concessions, that is to say, he would be willing to conclude peace any day, but naturally—(he begged not to be misunderstood)—he was determined, terribly determined. . . .

And he swung his impotent little fist through the air.

So determined was he.

Yes, determined. . . .

The General adjusted his eyeglasses and threw back his head. Just in front of him was the shining bald head of an admiral, nearby shimmered the thin, colorless, carefully brushed hair of a diplomat.

The members opposite lay in half-shadow. Shoulder to shoulder, one nonentity after the other, all looking just alike. And yet . . . he felt uncomfortable—formerly he had been impervious to such influences, but owing to the war—to overwork . . .

There!

One pale, glittering face amongst all those colorless nonentities, a pair of horror-stricken, frightened eyes, were fastened upon his face. Perhaps he only fancied it, perhaps they were really fixed upon the little old man whose jaws

opened and shut with a jerk. The General had seen this face somewhere, but at the moment was unable to place it. It was not really fright, it was horror that emanated from this pale shining face, with the wild, black eyes. This horror paralyzed the tongue of the old man on the tribune, paralyzed his gestures. His lifted arm sank suddenly, he gasped for breath, his narrow shoulders were raised convulsively—he bent over his manuscript and stammered.

But the pale phosphorescent face seemed to grow and shoot up into the air—it began to attract attention all over the house. The diplomat with the thin, carefully brushed hair blinked restlessly and wrinkled his brow.

The thin solemn voice of the speaker had again grown steady.

The tiny obstinate fist of the old man beat upon the table, and obstinately his toneless and tenuous voice reiterated, "Yes!" and "No!" "At once!" and "Never!" They were no longer words he was speaking, they were only sounds, only waves of air . . .

No, no, it was not the old man who was speaking . . .

Ackermann saw quite distinctly that this old man speaking was a corpse! That the tribunes were filled with corpses of generals and admirals, hung with orders and tinsel braid; that the members of the Reichstag were corpses still sitting there, as were also the stenographers, and the aged president with his head supported in his hand.

Corpses. A Parliament of corpses.

And the sun shone upon them. The voice of the living God called and thundered, but they heard it not.

But now the corpses began to tremble like a ship tossed by the wind. A hurricane rushed through the house. The corpses collapsed, the uniforms and glistening orders crumbled to dust.

The noise of singing . . .

In the distance resounded the step, the booming step of hundreds of thousands, millions—the singing of many voices

flew ahead of them. And this was the song of the hurricane . . .

Just then a hard bony hand touched his arm, a dry voice said: "You mustn't hang over the railing that way!" Ackermann found himself in the small gallery densely crowded with people who had no reserved seats. He had been on the point of going into one of his unconscious spells. Just at that moment, the house applauded. The orders and uniforms circulated through the hall. The friendly old man took his seat and again dreamed of the coffin from which he had been aroused.

One after the other the members made their appearance at the speaker's desk. Words and gestures. Now the ceremony was at an end. The tribunes began to grow empty.

But halt! Here is still some one who has a word to say. He has understood Fate's frightful question which demands an answer. He tries to storm the tribune. But the fleshy necks and floating beards hold him back, the advocates and even those who themselves are emaciated from hunger. Even they! The journalists in the press gallery shake with laughter.

He stands there, the only one, flaming, purple with wrath, white-haired. His frenzied voice is drowned by the noise.

The tribunes are now empty.

Pulses throb. Eyes are whipped by their lashes, the blood thunders in the ears, and the limbs leap. Smoke, fire! Enough, enough!

"Enough—and hopeless!"

The blue arch of the heavens shivers; darkness. The wheel of history creakingly completes its revolutions, it rolls on, crushing—dust, smoke . . .

Uniforms and robes surge down the stairs out into the day. Just as it is after a horse-race. The lawyers shoot through the crowd with their portfolios, they are always in

a hurry. Monocles sparkle, smiles gleam on the lips of beautiful women. Spurs clatter and swords rattle.

Carriages drive up, the automobiles emit fumes of smoke.

Noiselessly the limousine of the friendly little old man whisks past the wall of policemen.

Schwerdtfeger has spied his master at the top of the steps and brings the car to the curb without the slightest consideration for any one else. He knows nothing but his duty.

The General has only to step out of a house anywhere and walk across the pavement, and there Schwerdtfeger is sure to be waiting for him. The General has only to raise his foot, that is all. However, he has never given this a thought.

At the top of the steps the General spoke to an acquaintance also wearing high orders. He expressed his satisfaction at the proceedings—the speech, splendid—and for his part, the acquaintance assured the General, the speech was, in fact, a piece of statesmanship of the very highest order.

Then the General walked down the steps.

He saw before him the shining patent leather boots of an officer of the Hussars. A narrow, elegant back, an aristocratic profile, a quick daring glance from fine big eyes—the Hussar moved to one side and saluted.

“Ah—how did it agree with you?” What in the devil is that man’s name?

Affably the General shook hands with the Hussar.

“A nice evening—ahem, somewhat late . . . we had a . . . You told me a number of interesting things—?”

On his side the Hussar remained absolutely cool and correct. In the first place he was no longer a Bedouin but an officer of an Hussar regiment; in the second place, with all due respect, he had been dead drunk last night and when he awoke it occurred to him immediately that he had talked all sorts of nonsense and had come very near (God only knows why!) getting himself into the worst kind of trouble; in

the third place, he was no longer at a ball, but on duty, and all about him were high dignitaries and Excellencies.

Therefore, he remained cool, correct, determined not to let himself in for anything. His clear fine eyes beamed with candor.

"Unfortunately I was not able to follow you as closely as I should have liked—it suddenly grew so hot up there—and then that curtain caught fire."

But the Hussar maintained his reticence, answering only with a few stereotyped phrases. He even blushed slightly.

Schwerdtfeger closed the door and the General did not awaken from his profound thoughts until he was dazzled by the glaring sunlight shining into his office.

He drew the blue curtains, the light hurt his eyes, he was just beginning to feel the loss of sleep.

"In spite of that—" murmured the General to himself. The habit of expressing his thoughts aloud was growing on him.

"In spite of that—yes, he evaded me—well, to be sure, he is undoubtedly a man of the greatest self-control. But he blushed slightly. Why, I wonder?"

"Did he blush or not?"

"Possibly I was deceived, but it really looked to me as if he blushed!"

"But what was that he told me? Yes, how annoying that the incident with Dora came . . ."

"But why did he tell me?"

"Why? What? Even members of the best society—and . . ."

"I remember it quite distinctly—in spite of that . . ."

The General stared at the wall—the blood fled slowly from his broad face. Suddenly he shook his head. What an absurd thought!

He touched the bell.

Weisbach appeared and the General gave him a brief report of the Reichstag session, a mark of the greatest con-

fidence and friendship which Weisbach appreciated, despite the fact that he was stewing in alcohol, having been at Stroebel's until nine o'clock.

"Should you hear anything further about Captain von Doenhoff—!"

"Quite so, Herr General!"

Weisbach withdrew. The General looked green to him—the livid green of a corpse—it might have been the light or perhaps his own condition. He drank very little, but he couldn't carry his liquor since his shell-shock in Russia. The time they had all been buried by a shell that had shot the dugout to pieces—it was only by a miracle that he had been saved. He himself didn't know how it had happened—he had never been able to grasp it.

No sooner had Weisbach left the room than the General took up the receiver and asked for a certain connection.

Some time passed before any one answered.

"But I asked you," began the General impatiently—"to inform me at once—eight days ago—what, please—?"

## 5.

Ackermann's gaze wandered feverishly over the swarming uniforms and departing equipages. He was in a fever of desperation.

"This Parliament, what a disgrace! The curses of the people will fall upon these disgraced men, some time, some day!"

He had no eyes for the high officers, nor for the generals with their red facings, nor for the admirals with their gold braid. And no one paid any attention to him in his shabby wide coat—a simple soldier, one of the million whom nobody sees, exhausted by deprivation and anguish of spirit.

A mounted policeman, motionless as a statue, stood in the middle of the road amidst the fumes of the automobiles. He sat in his saddle with an expression of the most deadly



seriousness, as yellow as saffron, his nose peaked, cheeks fallen in, and eyes sunk in violet sockets. A mounted corpse was on guard before the Parliament building, starved to death in the saddle, but nevertheless doing his duty.

The metal bullets in the violet sockets turned suddenly, the saffron-colored skin grew taut, the russet-red mustache twitched.

He had discovered Ackermann and a suspicious threatening wrinkle darkened his brow.

The face of this common soldier was that of a man who cherished secret thoughts, thoughts of a quite specific character, dissatisfied thoughts. His life in the barracks had familiarized him with faces of this type, and he had made it his business to eradicate this expression wherever he found it.

He pressed his horse nearer and his gaze became merciless and as sharp as a knife. He was from the Imperial School and especially trained in hunting men.

At this moment, however, Ackermann passed like a somnambulist through the crowd of uniforms and equipages, as straight as a die across the street—without being jostled, touched or run over—remarkable!

"The time has come!" he whispered. "The time has come!" He hastened his steps.

You young men, you determined, courageous ones, the hour has struck! You who have yearned, have despaired, have pressed forward to the goal; you who love and hate; blessed messengers and heralds of the new kingdom, up, up, the hour has struck! Delay no longer, you messengers of God with the faces of men!

Angrily the eye of the mounted policeman followed the gray army coat which disappeared rapidly between the trees of the Tiergarten.

And behold!—already they are equipping themselves for the fray, the forerunners, who are to herald a new era!

Already they are bathing their faces in the light of a newly risen sun!

Already they are arising from their miserable prison cots. They will pass fearlessly through doors with a hundred locks as if passing through air. Already their gleaming eyelashes are being lifted in the barrack yards of all Europe. They will utter the triumphant word and the bullets will rebound from them, have no fear. Already they are saying their morning prayers near the mouth of the cannon—in the shell holes of the European battle-fields—they will demolish the guns, as if they were made of reeds, have no fear. Already they are growing restless in their sleep in the mass graves of Europe, already their eyes are opening, they will arise, stronger than Death, have no fear.

Already they are coming, already they are assembling all over Europe, those who are brothers and recognize one another by the radiancy of their countenances. Already their voices are resounding, here, there, throughout Europe, throughout the entire world!

They are coming!

Are they coming? Are they really coming?

Yes, they are coming! Listen! Already their steps can be heard in the gray of the morning.

And they will put an end to all darkness?

The darkness, the terrible darkness, will be brought to an end.

Already a red light is dawning in the Eastern heavens. From thence comes the light. They come and they will pass on and Paradise will blossom beneath their feet.

But their field-badge is neither red nor blue—their token is Love.

## 6.

"Inconceivable!" cried Herr Herbst, and threw up his little hands in astonishment. "Just think of all the things

people dream about! And now, Berlin, nothing but—débris, only débris, you say?"

Wrapped in his long russet-colored ulster, the stiff hat pushed down over his ears, Herr Herbst was sitting in the semi-darkness of the taproom of "The Lion of Antwerp." A very great change had taken place in him, a very noticeable change: he had on no collar! Formerly he had always worn a collar, if only a low one, and one that was never quite fresh and a little black tie. Any one familiar with the peculiarities of drunkards will understand what it signifies when they no longer wear a collar!

Opposite him sat the silent, shy, humpbacked host, Herr Glienicke, and between them stood a bottle.

Herr Glienicke cleared his throat raspingly, then answered shyly, whisperingly: "Yes, nothing but débris, a heap of débris, the whole of Berlin. How shall I express it?—a ruin. And ravens—"

"And ravens?" A cold chill ran down little Herr Herbst's backbone.

"The heavens were black with them. They rose like clouds, wherever one came. And corpses lay here and there, stretching their hands out to the débris—blue hands."

"What a terrible dream! And no human life anywhere, you say?"

"Not a soul, no. Only ravens, everything black with ravens. Not a living soul in all Berlin. Only débris and charred beams. Here and there an abandoned gun lay between the heaps of débris. But not a human being!"

"Ah, ah!—how frightful!"

"And then it began to snow—"

"Good day!" said at this moment a clear, sober, but modest voice and they both started.

A consumptive-looking young man had entered the room. The consumptive-looking young man approached the table, hat in hand, and made a slight stiff bow.

"I beg your pardon! Herr Herbst?"

The ulster arose tremblingly. Yes, but why in all the world should he tremble? It was not because of this clear, sober voice, no—it was because some one knew him, knew him by name . . .

"I should like to have a few words with you!" said the same voice, but a shade less modestly.

"A few words? Certainly!"

"But not here, if you please—on a special matter—"

And the two left the room. The humpback's owlish eyes followed them. Herr Glienicke had not budged from the spot. That tone: unmistakable. The police!

"If you please!" said the consumptive young man and turned his steps down the Ackerstrasse.

Herr Herbst dragged along by his side with somewhat shaky knees. He was almost perishing from fear, he was filled with the darkest presentiments.

As usual the children were playing in the dusty drafty street, but to-day they did not dare molest him because he was with a stranger.

In a high-pitched singsong they circled around a little girl who was crouching on the pavement, an old rag tied over her head. A black dog with a short stump of a tail tripped around with the children in the circle. He owed his life to his appalling emaciation. For out here in this part of the city neither a dog nor a cat was to be seen, far and wide, as they had all been devoured, fallen a prey to the professionals. The hollow-eyed, waxen children, dancing on the street, looked like corpses wrapped in rags who had arisen from the graves of a child's cemetery to play here. Their mothers were working somewhere in munition factories and their fathers had long ago rotted in the mass graves at the front.

And there was that wagon again, with the dirty white horse, driven by a pale emaciated twelve-year-old girl. Every day this wagon drove through the street, and if it did not actually turn into the Ackerstrasse it was sure to

be waiting at the corner. To-day only two little boxes were in it, but just then a man came out of one of the houses with another one, which he threw into the wagon as if it were a box full of empty bottles. Every day, and yet there were still children playing here!

The little dancing corpses, however, paid no attention to the wagon driving by with the coffins. They moved their circle somewhat to one side and went on singing.

Finally the consumptive young man broke the silence. With a smile that was not unfriendly he turned to Herr Herbst.

"You know of course that the big offensive commenced to-day?" He said this with the tone of a person who is endeavoring to make conversation. "Thousands of prisoners—"

"Thousands—is that so—" stammered Herr Herbst, confusedly.

"Yes, the very first day!" After that the conversation lagged. Well, that won't do, I see. The consumptive young man smiled at Herr Herbst with his short-sighted eyes and began anew with a somewhat cooler, more businesslike tone: "You don't know me, Herr Herbst?"

"Really not? And you've never even seen me? Despite that you came off immediately with me, think of that. A fresh proof that there are undeniable forces, magnetic and hypnotic forces, whereby certain persons are endowed with power over others. For eight days, eight full days, I've been following you like a shadow, my dear Herr Herbst. You're surprised? You see such things must be cleverly done. A few days ago I even ate at the same table with you in the Dorotheenstrasse. And at the close of the Reichstag session I stood quite close to you, as you saluted the high officer."

Herr Herbst started. Ha—ha—he had felt it instantly! His presentiments! The police were at his heels, the secret police. The General had put them on his track and now

he was—lost! Yes, this General, naturally, he wished to show his power, he had flung that terrible word at him, had annoyed him . . .

"In a word, I had orders to inform myself as to your personality."

"I know it."

"You know it?"

"I thought so! A moment."

Herr Herbst stopped to wipe the sweat from his brow.

"Yes, as I say I had orders," continued the young man garrulously. "Now I know all of your habits, your peculiar and by no means everyday habits. Only a well-schooled psychological instinct enabled me to keep from being led astray; I confess this quite openly. But now my—you will pardon me—my observations have been completed except for one very important and mysterious point. But that also will be cleared up. I considered that the time had come to make your personal acquaintance. Permit me to introduce myself; my name is Kunze."

The consumptive young man took off his light green plush hat and made a stiff bow.

"Very pleased!" stammered Herr Herbst, with an awkward scraping of the foot intended for a bow. His inflamed eyes, distrustful and fearful, were fixed upon the young man's sparkling eyeglasses. Nothing good would come of it, you could be sure of that—nothing good!

The consumptive young man, who called himself Kunze, was poorly dressed but everything was painfully clean. His thin overcoat, buttoned up to the neck, was worn at the edges, but showed signs of recent brushing. His patched shoes were freshly polished. He wore thin cotton gloves, but his cuffs had grown somewhat gray. He was flaxen-haired and his flaxen mustache was twisted into a sharp point. The eyes behind the eyeglasses seemed lusterless, expressionless and even stupid. Under his arm he carried a thin leather portfolio.

Like every one else he looked undernourished and his skin had an impure, greenish livid color.

"Let us hope that my acquaintance will be an agreeable one," resumed Kunze, after the ceremony of introduction was over, laughing softly as he said this. "For some people, for many people in fact, my acquaintance has been anything but agreeable, ha-ha! Yes, anything but agreeable! Now, now, you've not the slightest cause for anxiety, for as I've already told you, I've not permitted myself to be led astray by your strange habits. A moment, until the street car has passed—there. Some time ago you addressed a communication to our organization—"

"What, please?"

"That's what I call our bureau. Your entry, like all other entries of a similar nature, was automatically turned over to our organization. Among other things you brought heavy charges against personages of high rank, or it would be better to say—against relations of these personages, which demanded a quite special and careful handling of the case. It was for this reason that my chief gave me my orders."

Herr Herbst breathed more freely. Then it was not the General—it was this other matter—! But soon cold sweat stood on his brow. What a dangerous position he had put himself in! And why? Incomprehensible to him. In a state of intoxication, when he was dead drunk, he had written those two full pages. Too late. His legs trembled. He had difficulty in dragging one after the other.

"Where are we going?" he stammered.

Kunze stopped a moment and smiled. He had small, badly cared for teeth. "You can't imagine?" he asked with his head slightly bent to one side.

"How should I?"

"To your second home!"

"What—?"

"To your second home!"

"What?"

Herr Herbst put both hands up to his stiff hat—tottered back and started to run away.

"Here there, wait a bit! How will it look to see me chasing along after you! Wait, I say! But I must really beg you . . ."

Kunze took long strides until he had overtaken the hurrying ulster. He straightened his eyeglass, panted—his lungs were not in the best of condition—and laughed indulgently.

"Now, you see, there is no sense in doing that. But why did you take fright?"

"I—I . . ."

"You're still as white as chalk! Well, I see that your nerves are in an incurable condition, Herr Herbst, in a bad, very bad way, eh, eh! And yet we're only going to your rooms in the Blücherstrasse! I've told you already that there's still one dark mysterious point to be cleared up. . . . Here, cabby!"

Kunze with a grand manner beckoned to a cab. "Blücherstrasse!"

Herr Herbst raised his hands imploringly.

"No, no,—impossible, quite impossible!" he stuttered helplessly.

But now the consumptive young man suddenly stamped his foot in anger, and said with a sharp voice: "You will go! Please, Herr Herbst, please get in!" This was said somewhat more mildly and politely, while he was pushing Herr Herbst into the wobbly cab.

"It's impossible for us to walk that long distance. There's no time to be lost. My chief is already impatient because he's been reproached from a higher place. Now just lean back and take it easy. This goes on the expense account. Look here, in this notebook, here under H, those are the expenses. I could just as well have taken a taxicab!"

Herr Herbst looked straight before him with a desperate expression in his eyes.

Kunze cautiously pulled up his trousers. "My chief, he's



a Major, admonished me expressly to spare no expense," he continued. "My chief simply beamed! You've put us on an eminently valuable scent, Herr Herbst—a remarkably lucky accident! Confound it, this cab's just creeping along! The material is accumulating daily, the circle is nearly complete—we're working night and day—my chief will receive one of the highest orders—and possibly I may also—perhaps the Iron Cross, at least my chief hinted at the possibility . . ."

Suddenly Kunze interrupted this flow of talk and drew back further into the cab.

"Sh! Sh!" he motioned, pointing one long bony finger at the street. "Just look who's getting out of the street car! Just look! What? What? Incredible—Fräulein von Hecht!"

And it really was Ruth. She sprang quickly down from the car and made her way through the crowd. In a second she had vanished.

"Did you see her? Berlin's such a big city and yet one is continually meeting the same people. Just try the following experiment: keep any one you please in mind—wherever you turn there you see that person, I'll wager anything you like. What brings such a fine lady, I ask you, to this section of the city? What, what? If one didn't already know why! My chief is somewhat disturbed about this young woman—you can understand, that the daughter of a high officer—but that also will be cleared up in due time. Hie, cabby, can't you drive a little faster?"

## 7.

Ackermann came through the Tiergarten with a little parcel under his arm. It was still light, sunshine, day. As usual he chose comparatively unfrequented paths. He was coming from the War Office and was on the way home where some one was waiting for him.

Yes, they were already assembling, unquestionably! In England, America, Italy, France, Germany, Austria, Hungary—all over the world—the brotherhood! Only a blind man could fail to read the signs, only a deaf man could fail to hear the voices! Only a deaf man . . .

In the newspapers, between the lines—in pamphlets, essays, books, everywhere—signs pointing to this. Everywhere these voices. Despite the hordes of censors and agents sent out to strangle the truth, as Herod had the babes of Bethlehem put to death, purely out of fear, because he had become aware of . . . ah, ah—his murders were in vain.

The prisons are crowded, here in Germany and elsewhere. Poor duped slaves stand guard over their own liberators! They were being shot down by hundreds here and elsewhere. Poor deluded ones, murdering their brothers. But—THE IDEA LIVED! The walls would fall—throughout the world—they would be demolished by the idea, the idea which was there before the people themselves. The idea which the world nailed to the cross, tortured, weighted with stones and cast into the sea, covered with molten lead, which the ambassadors of Satan endeavored to destroy in a hundred thousand different ways—and yet it always was resurrected. The kingdoms of the world were destroyed, but this idea lived.

And the brothers would march in—they the ardent, the yearning, the willing ones.

And I also, even I, Ackermann, will endeavor to show myself worthy of such companionship.

His military service at an end, an end! He had made an end of it.

They would see him no more at the War Office.

For months he had wrestled with himself, during the past few weeks with sweat on his brow—but the idea had conquered. He was determined . . .

The drill jacket which all the clerks wore was wrapped in an old newspaper he carried under his arm. He was

taking it home with him to-day, as a sign that he was not coming back. His comrades asked him why he was packing up the jacket. "I'm through here!" he answered. But they only laughed. How could they be supposed to understand it?

Very well: they could do as they pleased with him.

Yes, the brotherhood would go marching on, and upon the bloody débris of this suffering world they would erect a new world! Raze the barracks to the ground, they would cry, demolish them, raze them! Raze them to the ground and set them on fire! These buildings, the incubators of slaves and overseers of slaves. Human dignity was violated daily a millionfold; the insane minds of Europe annually bred millions of slaves and hundreds of thousands of overseers trained to swing the whip. They sent these enslaved and outraged brains into the most remote villages, steppes and forests, brains in which the innocent and pure thought of the divine had been destroyed. Bureaus, schools, churches, factories, workshops—they had deluged the whole land with overseers of slaves, blinded by the darkness so that they were no longer able to recognize their brothers close by!

Raze them to the ground, burn them!

Demolish the warships of the pirates whose guns terrorize the world, demolish them!

Raze them to the ground—they will cry! the newspaper palaces erected by the powerful and rich of the earth for the dissemination of lies and deception, to poison the mind and seduce the morals of the nation.

Raze them and burn them!

Purify the schools and churches where innocent children and pure souls are defiled. Purify the temples, away with the false priests who with the name of the Redeemer on their lips preach the murder of nations. Away with them, away!

Away, away with the vain advocates, the hard-hearted

old men, the complacent fools, who play with the fate of peoples, play with it, away with them!

The time has come, O Brothers, for the world to be healed!

Demolish and raze the strongholds of gold, the temples of greed, the dungeons of freedom and happiness belonging to all the nations of the earth. Demolish the walls of steel and cement, where the robbers guard their treasure from thieving hands! Demolish them!

Their voices will resound like thunder—and will never again be suppressed!

Ah, in the present hour, blackest midnight of the nations of the earth, these voices are still drowned by the roaring of the guns . . .

Suddenly Ackerman stood still. He stood with his mouth wide open.

Sunk in his own thoughts he had unconsciously passed out of the quiet of the park into the dazzling sunlight and the swarms of people.

Every one was shouting, hurrying, hats were being waved—flags were floating on the Linden, flags of all colors, all sizes, fluttered gayly and merrily in the splendid silken blue of the skies.

The city had hung out its flags. Victory, victory!

The army had rolled forward like a tidal wave when a dam has given way—just as the General had prophesied. Hundreds of guns, thousands, tens of thousands of prisoners—a battery was moving quickly down the Linden. The Kaiser had ordered the "Victory Salute"!

Voices murmured, exultation had broken loose over the city of a million. The revolving doors of the hotels were kept busy grinding happy faces in and out. The lounges of the hotels were crowded, some of the women had donned their spring dresses while others were still wearing their furs. Waiters were carrying silver trays, orchestras were playing. Joy enlivened every countenance.

Yes, the splendid army was truly marvelous, magnificent: our boys fought and died just as they had during the early days of the war—just as if death were a huge joke.

And the leadership: incomparable!

Tens of thousands of prisoners—the number was growing from hour to hour—the booty not to be estimated—incalculable . . .

Victory, up there on the Brandenburg Gate, drove her four-in-hand forward with a smile born of victory.

Fountains of extras seemed to bubble up from the Linden. The crowds laughed themselves into snarls, they endangered life and limb simply to get hold of a piece of newspaper, just as those magnificent boys at the front sprang through hissing iron fragments. Umbrellas were broken, women lost the heels of their shoes, and the pickpockets had nothing to do but simply put their hands in the pockets and take anything they could find.

And the battery, four old cannon from the War of '70 passed by. . . . Victory! . . .

The General Headquarters simply swam in bliss—the English army wiped out . . .

The winter had been terrible—unspeakable beyond all measure! Death all around, out there and at home—unbearable! The act of dying, which hitherto had taken place with well-ordered decorum, had now developed into a panic. Friends died, servants, the cabmen fell from their seats, the unfortunates died on the street; you said "Good night!" to a well man, the next morning he coughed a few times and was dead! Unbearable, unbearable to move about day after day in the midst of peripatetic green and yellow corpses, these doomed ones, with the kiss of decomposition upon their brows. You, yourself, one of these peripatetic green and yellow corpses, yourself a doomed man! Unbearable!

And the children! No, let us not speak of them, these little crucified ones. Let us have only compassion for them! Cripples from the day of their birth, with soft bones, skulls

as soft as rubber, without either finger or toe nails—and they died, languished and died on the withered breasts of weeping desperate mothers. Pitiabile little coffins were also carried out of the homes of well-to-do burghers. They passed on like a stream, day and night, hundreds of thousands of them. Yes, it must be admitted, England had succeeded. To such a pass had matters come, even though the newspapers were not permitted to write about it. Beware, ye nations of the earth, be warned in time! Arouse not England's wrath, her very look can kill the fruit in the wombs of your women.

Life had become intolerable, wholly intolerable—and now, was there not a shimmer of hope?

Perhaps, perhaps there was!

Perhaps things were nearing an end? Perhaps . . .

Everything had been staked: fathers and sons, family providers, the mainstays of old age, hope, happiness and joy of living, honor, the future of the entire nation, health, property, cattle, horses, the bells from the churches, the cooking utensils from the kitchen—and a generation of newborn—everything, even the brains under the skull—perhaps, perhaps . . . The generals had cast the die, the little stone was hopping across the lucky numbers—perhaps . . .

Like imprisoned animals behind bars, millions of human beings paced up and down behind the iron bars of their cages and sniffed the air. It smelled like liberation—did it not? Once they were men, arrogant and full of faults, but at any rate men, now they had become imprisoned animals, outcasts, criminals, pariahs, spat upon and befouled, day and night, for four long years. Even the air which they breathed in their cages was poisoned. Had it not been asserted that the fat was extracted from the corpses . . . had it not . . . ? Bound to the wheel and roasted over a slow fire. Left unprotected by a gang of incompetents who dozed in their bureaus, polished their nails and were superior, superior—simply superior.

The powerful, the idols, the adored ones would most assuredly have worked everything out to the very last detail, taken every possibility into consideration, before they determined to cast the last die—(even to the brain under the skull) and led the last half million to the shambles.

Perhaps, perhaps . . .

Come, blessed day!

The women and the old men selling newspapers fled—they chased down the Linden followed by the pack. On the corner of the Linden and the Friedrichstrasse stood a woman weeping because her entire stock had been plundered by people who never stopped to pay.

Seventy millions roaming along inside the barbed wire enclosure like madmen—and the army had ventured an attack, as it seemed a successful attack.

The flags fluttered auspiciously in the silken blue of the skies. Light radiated from the golden goddess on the top of the Column of Victory.

The gigantic city was stirred out to the remotest suburb. Everywhere fluttered the news extras. Even the columns of yellow faces were illumined by the light of hope. The movements of the exhausted and weary men and women in the factories became quicker. There was hope and promise in the hissing of the steam engines, in the revolutions of the wheels.

Even a faint hope in the eyes of those over whom the agony of death had already cast its shadow; the last spark of hope gleamed in the eyes of the desperate, the hungry, the starving, the dying . . .

Yes, come, blessed day!

But hark! What is that?

A shriek from thousands of martyred children, a howl from thousands of martyred dogs—nothing—nothing—it is only the music from a military band that has just turned into the Linden. It was by no means up to the mark—but what could you expect?—humpbacks, lame, old men—and

just then the battery from the war of '70 gave the "Victory Salute"!

A gigantic aeroplane buzzed in the air, carrying ten passengers. Who would have believed it? It proved that there was still something left in the land, not much, but yet a few things: for instance, the women's hair from which cables and textiles could be made and the gold in the false teeth. The generals and the wearers of gaiters would not hesitate for a moment.

8.

Suddenly something red gleamed through the crowd, dazzling red coat facings, to be seen from afar.

Down the Linden passed a face, delicately flushed like a granite cliff at sunrise.

The pedestrians checked their steps, gazing curiously. One of those who held the life and property of the nation in their hands! Respectfully they raised their hats, their eyes beamed.

A little more and the crowd would have given an ovation to the General who was walking along the Linden with Otto, although he was entirely innocent in the matter of the tens of thousands of prisoners. The General touched his finger to his cap. He accepted this expression of enthusiasm with all due dignity and modesty. It was naturally not meant for him, it was meant for the incomparable army, for the favorites of fortune, the idolized and adored who now, at this very moment, were playing for high stakes—out there . . .

The General's countenance was composed and reserved as usual. Yet there was a big, even a conspicuous difference! Whereas his eyes were usually withdrawn into the deep gray sockets—rarely, very rarely did the General vouchsafe the curious importunate crowd a direct gaze from his eyes—they were to-day wide open and dazzling. There was a warmth about his gaze, as if the sun had licked an



ice field. Satisfaction shone in their depths, triumph, a quiet, suppressed triumph. And moreover the General was walking, which in itself was something very unusual. Now and again he had Schwerdtfeger drive him to one of the secluded alleys of the Tiergarten, where he walked up and down for a few moments, with his hands behind his back—never more than a quarter of an hour. Sometimes he walked home from Dora's, if it had grown too late. But as has been already said, these were exceptions.

He had instructed Schwerdtfeger to stop at the Brandenburg Gate, and had decided to walk the rest of the way to Stifter's, to the great satisfaction of Otto who had only been out of the hospital eight days and was busy all the time in the War Bureau to which he had been detailed. There was nothing he liked better than a crowd.

"Just look at the crowd!" said the General.

What would it be like on that day when the Linden would fairly be deluged with people—on that day! Shoulder to shoulder at the windows and on the balconies, the roofs black with them, the air filled with the aeroplanes and air cruisers. Triumphal arches, the entire length of the Linden, music—and the step of the victorious army returning home, from the dawn of day to sunset,—that rumbling under which the face of the earth would tremble. The flags decorated with laurel wreaths . . .

The General never passed under the Brandenburg Gate without visualizing the homecoming of the victorious troops. But to-day he really seemed to hear the rumble of their steps, to-day he could really see the flower-wreathed cannon rolling by between the black walls of people. Those silent guns which had done their duty so magnificently! The shouts of the jubilant crowds, handkerchiefs waving from the tribunes—there was nothing in the world which affected him more deeply, more genuinely stirred him than this thought. Unquestionably it would be the happiest day of his entire life.

The resemblance between the two was unmistakable. The same broad face, the older man's with a faint tinge of red spread over the grayish ground tone; the young man's pale with the deep red of youth upon his lips. The same eyes, here dauntless and thoughtful, there reckless and insolent.

The older man with a peculiar cross showing between the red facings of his coat; the younger's breast covered with decorations, a scar on the temple, the stiff left hand in a black glove. Wounded, apparently. Both tall, massive frames.

Otto endeavored to keep step with his father. But this was not so easy. For the General's steps were irregular and at times he wavered unnoticeably. He was not accustomed to walking and his mind was occupied with thoughts that affected his gait.

The General's composed gaze was fastened upon space; Otto's on the other hand flew here and there with lightning-like rapidity. The long weeks in the hospital, forgotten and past. For the last time, thank God! He had calculated that since the beginning of the war he had lain in a hospital for a full year, twelve long months. Four full months with that accursed shot in the head, one month with dysentery, two months with gas poisoning and so on—and finally this trivial little affair with his hand. The nice little nurse had done everything she could to make his stay in the hospital as agreeable as possible, but in spite of that he had had quite all he wished of it.

No, Otto saw no flower-decked cannon, such a thing never entered his mind, he saw nothing but—women! Three years at the front, only men, hell! A year in the hospital—there nothing else. His insolent eye took in every well-dressed woman, he never bothered himself about any other kind. No ankle, no shoe, no thigh, no lock of hair escaped his eye. That little one, for example, dozens of that kind! That other one, unpretentious, full of mysteries. That dark

one, whose eyes immediately widened under his gaze—sensual! But that shy pale little girl, who evaded his eye,—tortured by terrible desire. She understood instantly.

The eyes of the women glowed, flickered, drooped. Otto's eyes rested upon some of them with a soft, sentimental flattery; others felt his gaze like a dagger, brutal and unequivocal. He believed in individual treatment, applied according to his own estimate. Many reddened under the bold gaze of the audacious young officer. But Otto, in his boundless vanity, interpreted this blush of shame falsely.

This neck, this pair of ankles, and that splendid full swaying of the hips—three years at the front and a year in the hospital had been the undoing of the General's son.

Yes, this was life, and he resolved to dig his teeth into the flesh of this life, as a tiger closes its teeth upon a gazelle; he resolved to burrow in it with both hands as in bloody flesh. His brain was filled with women's bodies, women's lines and curves, women's hips, women's hair, stammered words and little shrieks. Yes, every day and every night he would seize hold of this life, every minute that he was off duty. He would make up for all the lost time, for these four wretched years that had been thrown away. Day for day . . .

Ten horses would not be able to drag him back to the front, to expose him again to fire. Anything, hell, if you like, but not a place where there was firing! Even the mere thought . . . and yet there had been a time when he had longed to hear the whistling of the explosives. Often he had intentionally exposed himself to the fire . . . incredible, perverse—and the projectiles whizzed close to his ear—incomprehensible!

And his little vanities—how ridiculous they seemed to him now! How incredible. Just to get himself admired by a few silly geese at home. What did the decorations and orders signify to him now?

No, to be perfectly frank, he didn't give a damn about a

hero's death! What a wretched swindle the whole thing was: it is blessed and honorable to die for the Fatherland! No one believed it any longer but high school boys, who had never caught a glimpse of the terrors of death out there. To-day he knew that they were nothing but lying phrases, with which nationalistic speakers and editors, themselves in a place of safety, hunted the others into shambles. Let us leave all this heroism to the bull-fighters who are paid for their work, Stroebel had once said to him—and at the time he had despised him for saying it. But now he understood him perfectly.

Yes, Otto had changed decidedly!

He scarcely grasped his own thoughts and actions of a year ago. Had he really thought and acted thus?

For instance, the time he dragged the wounded French officer back into the trenches at Langemarck! Gone out and got him, simply got him, whistling at all the fragments of metal which were rushing forward at the rate of five hundred or a thousand a second! No, to-day, by God, he, Otto, would not rescue any one—not even his own father—at the most a beautiful young girl and then only under certain conditions.

To be perfectly frank, the General's son was to-day nothing but a reprobate. Insolent and provocative he walked along by the General's side, enjoying to the full the admiring glances directed towards his glittering stars and decorations. Mankind mirrors mankind. As did all the other countries, Germany also speculated with man's lowest instinct, that of vanity. Otto was intentionally not wearing his overcoat, although the weather was by no means warm.

"Ha!" laughed the General himself.

"What did you say, papa?"

"These people are absolutely crazy!"

Suddenly Otto blushed. His eye twitched restlessly, the wound on his temple grew suddenly deep red. An elegant open car drove quickly by, and in it sat—Hedi!

Hedi—in a magnificent fur coat, floating plumes on her hat and in her lap a little long-haired, well-fed dog.

She didn't see him, she didn't vouchsafe a look at the street. She sat like a lady who is accustomed to drive in her own car through the crowds and thinks nothing at all about it.

This was no surprise to Otto. A few days ago he had met the little Saharet at a tea-room on Unter den Linden frequented by the demi-mondaines and she had told him that Hedi was Stroebel's "private secretary." Stroebel had turned Saharet out—simple matter, a few pieces of brown paper—and then, as Saharet had put it, "the other one" had been installed. Wasn't it a scream? But for all that, Hedi was far above the average of all these chattering geese—but she was cold, cold and calculating, nothing but an egotist. And there was nothing Otto disliked more than an egotist. If it came to that he would also have been willing to have engaged Hedi as a private secretary. Yes, you must take off your hat to this Stroebel!

The entire incident had one great disadvantage for him: he would unfortunately be obliged to curtail his visits to Stroebel's "hotel"—a pity, a thousand pities.

## 9.

The waves of enthusiasm had rolled up as far as Stifter's. Laughter could be heard even there to-day—the bright laugh of a woman—an otherwise unheard-of proceeding in Stifter's establishment. Pop! There was a popping going on all through the room, just as there was at the front when the enemy flyers were sighted. Three, no, four tables had ordered champagne.

They were celebrating the victory; to-day was not the time to be small about such matters—a glass to the health of the magnificent boys out there. The two captains of cavalry who at times irritated the General had invited a large circle

of friends, and the whispering waiter carried bottles under both arms. A toast—three cheers! somewhat suppressed but none the less enthusiastic, hurrah! Glasses clinked.

Otto enviously observed the high spirits at the next table. How gladly would he have been in their midst. Yes, it must be admitted that they were going at a rattling tempo! Papa's society, on the other hand—well, thank God, it was only for this one evening. He couldn't refuse papa. And after all he would be released by ten—eleven o'clock at the latest. From that time on he had an appointment.

The first courses were partaken of in silence. The General's pupils were extended and his gaze was far away. He was thinking of August 4, 5, 6—of that time, Quatre Vents!

He could distinctly hear the firing—that unforgettable firing that was raging all around him that time—it must be raging just so out there now, rolling up like the surf of a hellish ocean from horizon to horizon. Crashing, pulverizing, the heavens falling and the earth yawning with gigantic cracks. Yes, they would now get a taste of it, the "yellow cross" and "blue cross"—those unteachable fellows over there! A merciless smile, full of cruel triumph, played around the General's blue lips.

The General could distinctly see the smoking battle-field. But what he did not see was the little crooked-legged tailor Hanuschke—who by mistake bolted into his office one day when serving as an orderly, thereby arousing His Excellency's displeasure—this tailor Hanuschke with the transverse cut between his mouse-like eyes, who, at the moment that the General was drawing a stalk of asparagus between his teeth, was running for his life. No, that he did not see.

Like a flash the little crooked-legged Hanuschke swept over a torn-up field and vanished in one of the gaping crevices just at the very moment the General laid the sucked-out stalk of asparagus back upon his plate.

He had been commanded to the "strippen-flicker"—that is

to say to those detailed to repair the cut telephone wires. Ugly work!

There was an explosion and Hanuschke drew in his head. Then he wiped the sweat from his brow with his sleeve—just as he did that time when he had the door between him and the General—precisely the same gesture. And again he was flying like lightning over the field and again he popped into another hole, this time a funnel left by a shell. That devil, that thrice accursed devil, he panted and listened—(The General was just pouring himself a glass of Fachinger)—never in his whole life had the tailor experienced anything of the kind. He, he personally, was being pursued by an English flyer, who evidently took him to be a courier or God knows what! This devil came down to ten meters, espied him anew and kept throwing down his little bombs. He could distinctly see his face when he bent over to hurl a bomb, even the little close-cropped mustache over the teeth—this shell hole did not offer him sufficient shelter, and again the tailor flashed along towards the little grove; if he could reach that he would be safe. Sweat was running in rivers down his face. Such a devil, an accursed!

The General drew a fresh stalk of asparagus between his teeth.

“And you?” he asked, without looking at Otto as was his custom.

“What did you say, papa?”

“And you?”

“What about me?”

Lost in thought the General was silent for a few moments, and then began again: “I mean—it must be intolerable for you not to be at the front—just at this moment.”

Otto flushed.

“Just now when the course of history will be determined for the next century or longer. Perhaps in four weeks, the physician said, didn’t he?”

“At the very earliest.”

"The earliest—?" The General nodded his head regretfully. "God only knows what the situation will be in four weeks if it goes on this way!"

Well, God might know it, for all he cared, and get what pleasure He could out of it, but to him, Otto, it was a matter of complete indifference. He had no faith in this offensive, the entire thing seemed to him to be hazardous to the last degree. He took this opportunity of breaking the news to the General as gently as he could that he had taken a room out near his place of work because, as he explained, his duties began at seven in the morning. The truth was that he wished to remove himself from parental control.

"Work is the first consideration," answered the General. He stopped.

A toast had just been proposed at the adjoining table. Three short hurrahs! somewhat louder: The Kaiser!

Tact demanded that silence should be maintained during this toast.

But Hanuschke, the tailor Hanuschke? What of him?

The little crooked-legged tailor was still sweeping over the field towards the rescuing grove. His shirt, in so far as one could speak of a shirt, was sticking to his body with sweat. Had such a thing ever been heard of during the entire war, that an individual should be chased by an aeroplane? Shrapnel exploded over this little grove, yellow and gray spiders, but after all that was Paradise compared with this English double-decker. He stepped over a fallen German gunner lying there with his throat cut open—again he could hear the noise of the buzzing behind him. Just then Hanuschke shrieked wildly. The Englishman with his little close-cropped mustache seemed now to be bent upon getting him. He flew close to the earth and seemed to be trying to run over Hanuschke. The tailor had recently seen a German observer spring from a captive balloon with a parachute which an enemy flier had set on fire. Would you believe it? The enemy flyer came back and shot at the



man holding onto the parachute, who was steering himself desperately with his legs. It certainly looked funny and he and some of his comrades laughed loud at the sight—but this was not a laughing matter. On the contrary something occurred which had not happened to the tailor since his first battle. At the last moment he threw himself on the ground and the machine passed right over him. The wheels struck the ground at top speed, throwing the dust up in clouds and the machine was tossed about like a ball. Was he in trouble, the devil? But the devil began to mount and turned again. In his desperation the little tailor ran directly towards him, he must get through—crack—sometimes one has good luck. With his arms and legs whirling like a windmill the tailor sped on to the little grove. Suddenly his legs literally forsook him. He fell and was hidden from sight by a wave of dirt. He gasped for breath, vomited, and then managed to extract himself from the dirt, pale and with his strength exhausted. Something wholly unexpected had happened, something on which he had not reckoned in the least; a shell had struck near him.

Trembling he tottered forwards, his strength all gone. His face was bleeding.

Twenty steps more, ten steps—there he was!

Steaming, he threw himself down under the trees and wept. And he thought of the center shot that time—at Souchez—when a field telescope suddenly fell on him—and he thought of the time when instead of opening the door of room No. 6, he had by mistake popped into No. 7 and found himself suddenly standing before a General. Had he not done this stupid thing, who knows, perhaps he would be sitting comfortably in Berlin to-day!

Yes, he wept from sheer nervous exhaustion, for no other reason, for the crashing shrapnel shells, which were looking for the battery, didn't disturb him in the least.

By the time the General had got round to the filled pancakes, Hanuschke had vanished into his little grove.

The General made use of a toothpick.

His gaze, somber and thoughtful, passed over the heads of the Captain's lunch party.

"I'm worried about Ruth!" he said.

"Ruth?"

"Yes. She's causing me a great deal of anxiety!"

"But, papa, this Dietz would really not have been the right husband for her. A superficial person."

"Superficial person?" The General looked at Otto in astonishment.

"Yes, to be sure. Frightfully superficial, papa!"

The General shook his head.

"It isn't that . . ." And he was again lost in his own thoughts. Well, Otto could imagine what it was! Ruth had evidently been indiscreet enough; it was just like her to blurt out her views to papa. Otto had never concerned himself much about Ruth, as was customary in the family, where each one lived his own life. But he had had frequent talks with her of late. He even had tea with her one day in her little salon, which, for a brother, was going very far. But since he had discussed "death and the devil" with Ruth—as he expressed it—he regarded her as one of the most intelligent persons of his entire circle of acquaintances, to say nothing of relatives. She had her own opinions on all kinds of subjects. Well, he could only say that six months ago he would have taken her to be wholly mad, had she expressed these views to him. In many respects, it must be admitted, it seemed to him that her views—especially for a woman, a lady—no wonder—poor papa!

He asked no more questions and the General remained silent.

Otto was hypnotized by a blue flame dancing in the center of the adjoining table. It was what was called a "Fire-tongs"—a high per cent punch.

Without any transition the General suddenly began to speak of the Government, whose incompetency was ob-

vious. Where was it all to end? And the Kaiser? Only they alone, those men who had led the army from victory to victory were capable of dictating peace.

In the meantime it had escaped the General entirely that the other guests in the quiet restaurant had been thrown into a state of strange excitement. Not until all heads began to turn in a certain direction was Otto's attention attracted. Something that looked like a big dog was crawling over the carpeted floor, and this seemed to affect the guests unpleasantly, nay, to fill them with horror. Some wrinkled their brows, the eyebrows of the ladies were lifted to their utmost limit. The conversation at the captains' table suddenly halted.

However, it turned out to be not a dog that was crawling across the carpet at Stifter's, but a human being, a soldier in field-gray who dragged himself along by the aid of two short crutches, his two maimed legs slipping along behind, while his body was shaken by the most terrifying tremor. On his head he wore a little army cap, and it was this that conveyed to Otto the knowledge that he was a soldier. Unheard-of, he thought, to let such a person loose upon the public!

But the head-waiter came to the rescue and by the exercise of a little tact the scene passed over as quickly as possible. He succeeded in persuading this human ghost, that had come crawling from the trenches into Stifter's exclusive restaurant, to turn and leave the room.

The guests breathed more freely. The gay conversation at the table where the two captains sat was immediately resumed.

The General in his niche had noticed nothing of the incident. But when the head-waiter opened the door to let the unfortunate creature out, there rushed in the sound of pealing bells ringing in the victory.

The General took his glass in his hand and rose from his seat:

"To our Fatherland, Otto!" he said.

And Otto, to his intense astonishment, saw that the General's eyes were moist. Never in his life could he have imagined such a thing possible.

And she will be no less surprised, when I tell her about it, he thought.

## 10.

Terrible was the peal of the bells, as it fell upon Ackermann's heart.

The air, shimmering over the city, howled and moaned. The death cry of thousands, moans and gasps, the plaints of widows and whimpering of little orphans, who do not know why they cry. . . . Like gigantic mouths filled with blood, the brazen bells swung out over the city and vomited fright and horror over the roofs.

If thou still believest in God kneel down . . .

He has seen them—not those down there—waving their hats!—has seen them—the fields swept by the storm. Almighty God! Mercy, have mercy in Thy wrath! There he lies—the image of God, son of a mother, born in travail, reared in pain—he is dead—he will die—he dies—there he lies—and here, here, pieces, fragments—he has passed on . . .

Ackermann's face was ashen gray.

Little groups of wounded, maimed, who cling to each other for support, fall again and again, and the horrible path of the shell howls over their heads—unfortunates, who are doomed to death, if fate is not merciful. And the bandaging stations, where the physicians are at work with sweating glassy eyes—and the shell pursuing its terrifying path above their heads . . .

Curiously enough, a long-forgotten experience came back to him at this moment. His regiment had attacked. A dead Indian, with his head bent backwards, lay on the edge of a

shot-up English trench. Handsome, the nobility of this thousandfold outraged and humiliated race in his features. And—what do you think?—the sweaty rough hands of his comrades, wet with sweat and blood, the rough hands of workingmen and peasants, stroked the face of the dead Indian as they marched by. Stroked it one after the other. You were a handsome fellow!—now all is well with you, no longer any cares. Well, old fellow, they've got you at last! Caressed his face—their *brother*!

Brother, a brother!

Ackermann was driven forward by the pealing of the bells, as if every stroke had been that of a club. His fluttering coat floated out behind him.

Yes, yes, a thrice sacred Yes! God knows it!

Some one must make a beginning! Some one must oppose himself to the masses rushing along in madness—some one must give the signal, must in fact *be* the signal—some one—it's all the same who, even though he be trodden to the ground and torn into pieces. Some one, others would follow, more and more!

Some one, yes, some one—

The fluttering coat stood still; ecstasy shone on Ackermann's face.

"Now then, I'm ready!" he cried.

Ready, ready? Ready for what?

"Just ready, simply ready!"

He was determined.

He was ready to-day as he had been yesterday, months ago, years ago. He was determined, ever since he had stormed at Langemarck and had seen the rows of his comrades fall as if by magic. Now he knew. He was the tested and chosen one of God.

Everything was prepared. The pamphlet was ready. Richard, his younger brother, would have it printed outside Berlin as he had the others—friends would circulate it. His mother? She must understand. And Ruth? Ruth had

courage. Moreover it was not the time to think of such things.

"Forward! Forward!" The bells howled it, the death cry in the air, the rattling breath of the dying, the plaints of the widows and whimpering of the little orphans—the comrades cried out to him, those over whose heads at this very moment the shell was taking its terrible path; the comrades, who now lay with glassy eyes, friend as well as enemy, the comrades now bleeding to death, friend as well as enemy—all, all: Forward!

"Ackermann! Ackermann!" cried admonishing voices in the air.

He stood still and gazed up to the unknown voices in the air.

"Ackermann! Ackermann!"

"Ready—ready!" cried Ackermann and hurried on.

## 11.

It didn't take a minute for the consumptive young man to open the windows and pull up the shades. It looked as if Kunze had just returned from a trip and was taking possession of his apartment in the Blücherstrasse. A layer of dust and sunlight lay over the roofs, the sound of the pealing bells solemnly floated into the room.

"Now, now—come right in."

Hesitatingly little Herr Herbst dragged himself across the threshold. It had to be! There was no escaping the young man with the eyeglasses. A shaft of light penetrated the dark apartment, and he suddenly closed his eyes as if they had been singed—but what good did it all do? None in the world. He had already seen it, in spite of everything, yes, even though he had not looked in that direction: the hook over the door leading into the bedroom. That was all he saw—nothing else except this hook.

Ah, ah, ah!

Groaning he sank into a chair and seemed to crumble to pieces.

"Now, just a second, my good sir!" cried Kunze pantingly. A bead of sweat ran over his brow. The least physical exertion, even the very slightest, exhausted him immediately. "The lungs, you understand. Just a second, and I'll be at your service!" Feverishly his eyes roamed about over the furniture and walls. He made no attempt to conceal his astonishment, no, why should he, from whom should he conceal this? He was astonished—stared with open mouth!

The red plush parlor set of the living-room, alone worth a fortune to-day! The chandelier with the glass prisms, the red carpet, the vases, bric-à-brac, picture frames everywhere—a small palm in the corner, a phonograph. The curtains and portières gracefully draped over brass rods. The bedroom, snow-white! And everywhere the most scrupulous order and cleanliness, except for the dust which had collected here and there.

Taken as a whole, a comfortable bourgeois home, the home of a citizen in good circumstances—but deserted!

"And you prefer to live in that hole, in that tenement house—when you have this magnificent apartment?" cried Kunze in sheer astonishment.

Herbst didn't answer. He still had on his stiff hat and sat all crumpled up so that nothing was to be seen of his face. The narrow shoulders in the shabby russet-colored ulster trembled.

"Would you believe it? Yes, a magnificent apartment! And you have no fear of thieves? My God! There is thieving going on day and night in Berlin. The city fairly seethes with thieves and housebreakers. There are battalions, armies, of thieves and knaves at work in this city!"

"No one"—groaned the ulster at this point—"no house-breaker would dare. He would turn back at the threshold. No one!"

Kunze laughed loud and lustily. He threw the thin overcoat and the little green plush hat on a chair and began shuffling around the apartment. He was completely in his element. His little eyes, which looked lusterless and stupid behind his glasses, shone with greed. He stuck his pointed nose into the presses and drawers, even behind the curtains. At any rate, one thing was a dead certainty, he would take possession of this apartment—he would simply requisition it for official purposes, a stroke of the pen and there you were! The most fastidious ladies could be received here—and in what a wretched hole he was living at present!

When he got to the kitchen, he stuck out his tongue in sheer astonishment. Unsuspectingly, indeed, without the slightest idea of finding anything, he had opened the cupboard, and lo and behold! wine, wine, bottles upon bottles of it! Bordeaux, Burgundy, Moselle, three, four dozen and all peace-time quality! Couldn't be bought to-day. Wine, his passion, his—! In a twinkling, wholly automatically, he had uncorked a bottle.

And the secret of this little old man, the dark chapter? He had no anxiety about that.

"What riches, Herr Herbst!" said Kunze with a laugh; coming back from the kitchen with the bottle in his hand. "You're a strange bird! Now we're going to celebrate your return to your apartment. Permit me to pour you a glass! You're not going to refuse to drink just a little glass with me, are you? Yes, it is superb here, reminds me of home, just as it was in my old home!" Without further ado he made himself comfortable on the red plush sofa.

"To your very good health, Herr Herbst!"

Herr Herbst had taken off his hat—startled by the jubilant cry in the kitchen and the snapping of the cork—and his little yellow furrowed head seemed to Kunze to be a turnip, a genuine turnip upon which mold here and there had settled.



"Yes, exactly as if I were at home. Just as it was at our house. My father—have I told you that already?—is pastor in a country district. Loves his little glass of wine, his cigar and praises the Lord! Yes, he's like that, you see. As soon as he slips into his robe he has no sympathy with a joke, no, I beg of you—for God's sake, serious, dignified, shepherd of his flock. When the war broke out he said to me: 'Enlist immediately, hurry to the colors, it's your moral duty, enlist. Fighting,' so he went on—'the categorical imperative—Kant'—he is a philosopher, my father—ah, ah, what a wonderful wine!"

On a table opposite the red plush sofa, in a broad frame, was the enlarged photograph of a young soldier with a fresh, impertinent, youthful face. A sharpshooter, booted and spurred, the barrel of his gun decorated with flowers. The frame of this picture was draped with crêpe and a couple of candlesticks containing half-burned candles stood in front of it. That is undoubtedly the son who fell. What was his name—Robert?

On the wall directly above the sharpshooter with his fresh young face hung two portraits in oval frames: a somewhat corpulent woman, full-breasted, full-cheeked, a slight double chin and conspicuously large round eyes. The lady had a friendly smile, good-natured, somewhat embarrassed. She wore a chain and a big crucifix about her neck. Near by a man, somewhat arrogant, very dignified, the full dark hair meticulously parted, the eyes confidently looking into space. In a long coat, narrow black tie; a civil official, who was calling upon his chief. When you looked at the corpulent lady with the friendly smile, she seemed just about to open her little mouth and babble out something, to effervesce, as it were—but the man, more dignified, remained mute, silent. His hand half hidden in the black coat, somewhat stiff and pompous, a small hand . . .

" . . 'beat them over the head'—said my father, who is

a fiery patriot—"the devil's own brood who out of sheer envy and revenge have fallen upon our beloved Fatherland—smash in their skulls, tear them to pieces—it's the will of the Lord! Pack your things at once!" Well, there was nothing doing as far as active service was concerned. Unfortunately not, unfortunately not. I've already told you about my lungs. But every one according to his strength, isn't that so? That was not entirely to my father's liking—"

Suddenly Kunze stopped talking. He was absorbed in the study of the small hand of the man in the long black coat. He started, adjusted his eyeglass—took a sip of wine. Ahem!

What, could this dignified, this intolerant, this silent man, with his gaze looking into space—?

And this livid yellowish turnip, somewhat moldy, if you'll permit me to say so—could it be—?

Impossible, quite impossible! And yet this hand, this little hand and even the short mustache, grayer now, to be sure, and shabbier—incredible as it seemed, this serious, dignified man in a long coat and the little, bald-headed, dried-up, demoralized creature with the inflamed yellow-rimmed eyes, they were of a truth one and the same person!

Kunze was so astonished that he lost the thread of his discourse. He rose and dabbed his face with his handkerchief.

Ahem! He polished his eyeglasses, walked up and down and finally disappeared into the kitchen to fetch another bottle of wine. His countenance had undergone a change when he returned. He regarded little Herr Herbst with a cool and objective glance. He filled the glasses, cleared his throat and began:

"But enough of this idle talk"—his voice sounded composed and business-like—"we've no time to lose, as I have already permitted myself to remark; the Major is pressing the matter, and he in turn is being pressed by the Colonel,

you know how it is in the army. But since this high personage has got himself mixed up in the matter—”

“A high personage?” Herr Herbst suddenly pricked up his ears.

“Yes, yes. I can tell you nothing more. It’s one of the strangest cases that has come to the notice of our department for a long time.”

“A high personage?”

“A very singular case. Not you alone turned in a report, for which we have to thank you—no—from another quarter also, simultaneously, do you hear, *simultaneously*—some one desired information—but permit me to break off here . . . To my extreme regret it’s necessary for me to put a question to you officially, in order to round off my investigation as to your valued personality. A single point remains, as I have already said. But before I touch upon this point, I beg of you most respectfully to read this document.”

Ceremoniously the consumptive gentleman handed Herr Herbst a card fastened to a linen background.

Little Herr Herbst read it with his inflamed eyes, read it, understood and trembled. In black and white was here to be read that Herr Gottlieb Kunze was authorized to make arrests . . .

“You have taken cognizance—?”

“Yes, yes—cognizance—”

“Very good, and now I put to you the question—”

The ulster got up, white as chalk.

Two sharp piercing eyes drew nearer. Kunze had now removed his eyeglasses.

“Why did you—?”

“No, no—ah, for the love of God!”

“Why did you abandon this apartment?”

Instantly the old man collapsed. He covered his face with his little hands and sank back in the chair.

“Herr Herbst!”

The little man started up and then drew back. “I can not

—I can not—as true as there’s a God in heaven!” he cried and fastened his eyes imploringly upon Kunze.

“Herr Herbst!” A hand was raised.

The little old man backed away to the window and groped for the window-sill.

The hand seized hold of his coat-tails.

“But you wouldn’t think of—? Now come!”

Unresistingly the little old man permitted himself to be led back to his chair by Kunze.

“Calm yourself,” said the cold official voice. “Have confidence in me. Make a full report. I myself will be your lawyer, will interpret the matter—whatever it may be—please, drink this wine, so, so! I’m also a human being. But duty, you understand—”

The little old man nodded.

Kunze himself was as pale as death from excitement. His brain—the brain of a secret agent—was at work—sensational disclosures, state treason, superiors, advancement, the Iron Cross . . .

“You, yourself, were a servant of the state and know what it means—”

The little old man wrung his hands and sobbed. Then he sat down, straightened up, took an attitude—precisely like that in the portrait, a shadow of his former self.

“I know, I know, I once held a government position. Very well, as you demand official testimony—I shall endeavor to give you the explanation you desire. It’s difficult for me,—my thoughts, my words—nothing is as it was formerly—God in heaven, it’s quite impossible to say it—”

“Calm yourself. We’ve plenty of time, we can spend the evening together and take plenty of time.”

“Well, you see, we had a canary bird—” the little old man began stammering.

“A canary bird? Go right on without any fear!”

“A canary bird—by the name of Hansi. This little bird was always allowed to fly about in this room, in all the

rooms. It made some dirt, but we loved the canary—and my wife was especially devoted to Hansi . . .”

“I understand, the women—”

“Yes, but what did I want to say? Hansi? What has Hansi to do with it? You’ll find the cage still hanging there in the kitchen. Yes, but what has Hansi to do—?”

“Don’t hurry—take one thing at a time!”

“Ahem. She grew more and more peculiar, yes, that was it. She really talked only to the bird.”

“Your wife?”

“Yes, she. Grew more quiet and more peculiar. As for me, I could go out, go to a saloon, drink—you understand, it’s not necessary to say why I drank.

“Our boy meant everything to us. I had retired, and we moved to Berlin on account of his studies. Then came the war, he entered the army as a sharpshooter, and finally he was sent to the front. But one day we received the terrible news—one day . . .”

“That he had fallen?”

“Fallen?”

“Yes, naturally, you said—”

The little old man shook his head.

“No, not fallen, sir,” he whispered, “he was driven into death, I have documents, letters—slaughtered, futilely—”

“You should not permit yourself to make such severe accusations against certain personages,” interrupted Kunze, not without some severity.

“Well then, fallen, just as you like. It grew stiller and stiller here—my wife never left the apartment, never set foot across the threshold. She sat here all the time. But suddenly one day she no longer sat here, but she stood—do you hear?—at first in the middle of the room and then later in the corners.”

“She was evidently suffering from melancholia?”

“Yes, that was it. She couldn’t bear it, it was too much for her! Too much, too much! And then one evening I

came home late. The moon was shining. I could see everything fairly distinctly. And there I saw her standing here—under the doorway. Here, look here!”

“Yes!”

“But see here—she was standing *so far* from the floor! At first I thought that Hansi had flown to the top of the press as he often did and she was trying to catch him—but suddenly, I saw . . . then it struck me as being very strange . . . that she didn’t answer. But of late she often didn’t answer. And then, I think to myself—then I look to see—upon what is she standing anyway? She was standing on nothing! Her feet were turned downwards—but nothing was under them—only the moonlight—nothing else—I could see it quite clear and distinctly . . . she was floating in the air . . . and then I knew what it was . . . in that moment—”

Disappointment in the eyes of the consumptive young man! He had been expecting something quite unusual—and here he was listening to an everyday story, just such a thing as had happened hundreds of times in Berlin during the war.

The little old man gasped for breath. He sprang up and tossed his short thin arms wildly about in the air. He clenched his tiny yellow fists and shook them in a frenzy. His face grew distorted, his yellow stumps of teeth gleamed, foam appeared upon his lips.

“And all because of that!” he screamed, beside himself, and his face suddenly grew blue so that Kunze drew back frightened—“all because of that, of that! That’s the reason I hate him—hate him—the arrogant—hate him—with my own hands I would—God helping me—hate him—”

“Hate—hate—” His hands twitched.

And suddenly the little old man plunged to the floor. He had fainted.

The phonograph in the corner near the palm ground out:

*Die Vöglein im Walde,  
Die singen ja so wunderwunderschön,  
In der Heimat, in der Heimat,  
Da gibt's ein—ha! ha! ha!*

Yes, the record was spoiled, and every time it got to the last line, at the word *Wiedersehn!*—the apparatus laughed. And Kunze had to keep jumping up and winding it up again.

Kunze lay on the sofa, keeping time to the music with his patched, freshly polished shoes. At times he interrupted his chatter, long enough to sing a verse of this soldier's marching song, at times he also hiccoughed, with all due respect. A row of empty bottles stood on the table with the embroidered salmon-colored cover—the pride of the corpulent, friendly soul there on the wall.

Herr Herbst sat there with red cheeks, his eyes glistening from the effects of the wine, puffing on a small black cigar. He didn't drink from a glass, oh, no! Kunze had never seen anything like it, he simply put the bottle to his mouth and let it run down his throat. With close attention he listened to Kunze.

"—and so it was in this way, my good sir, that I came to G III, you see, sir."

"G III?"

"Yes, G III. That's what we are called. Only a code. So secret are we, quite secret—pst, pst! We don't even have a name."

"Many officials?"

"Many?"

Kunze laughed and settled himself in a half-recumbent position. The face of little Herr Herbst now seemed to him long-drawn-out with a brow as high as a house, such as one sees in a refracting glass. "Many, you ask?" he repeated mysteriously and importantly. "Many?—Our name is *legion!*"

"Legion?"

The house-high forehead began to shrink and a circular cloud of smoke took its place. Herr Herbst had jumped back at this word and in his fright had exhaled the smoke of his cigar.

"Yes, legion. Everywhere and omnipotent. Even where one would least expect us. Yes, my good sir—everywhere. In every city in Germany—in every general staff—in every office—in the postoffice, railroad administration—in the cabinet offices—G III is simply everywhere."

*In der Heimat, in der Heimat,  
Da gibt's ein—ha! ha! ha!*

Kunze jumped up and instantly the horn began to howl:

*Ich hatt' einen Kameraden . . .*

"Yes, everywhere. No one knows but what the eye of G III is fastened upon him. Even I do not know but what I myself am under observation! Yes, that's the way it is! All civilized countries have the same arrangement, spend millions on it—our organization, in fact, is small compared to that of other great powers. Small, in comparison, but it works reliably. You can take my word for it!

"We open trunks so that the owners notice nothing; the opening of letters is one of our specialties. We keep a strict eye upon the correspondence of thousands!

"We either make simple copies or, when dealing with cases of peculiar interest, photographic reproductions. We know everything, we know the secrets of the highest personages. We serve as waiters in the restaurants, and whenever an important business conference is being held, we are sure to be at hand. We even have our agents observing the high dignitaries of our allies. We bore holes in doors and open writing desks. Princes, ministers, members of Parliament—we know their innermost thoughts.

"Yes, we do everything imaginable! Your young protégé



—my good man—is in good hands. And also that high dignitary who is interested in the conduct of his little daughter—even he will be satisfied. Yes, we do everything. And you and I—perhaps you don't believe it—will receive an order—you also, do you hear? I will see to that, I!"

But as the ulster remained silent, even in the face of this dazzling revelation, the straw-colored head peered over the top of the table. The face of little Herr Herbst had undergone a complete change. It had no eyes, no nose, no mouth, but on the other hand was surrounded by a thin gray beard. What he really saw was the bald head of little Herr Herbst who had fallen asleep. At this moment the ulster began to slide, and without a sound it sank to the floor.

"And now another Moselle—and still a Moselle, three times hurrah!" sang Kunze with his bright tenor voice, and began fox-trotting out to the kitchen. The house seemed to rock in a frightful manner.

"Gloria—Victoria—" howled the phonograph as if for its own amusement.

Ackermann stopped before the house in the Tiergartenstrasse.

An arm was thrown about him in an infinitely tender embrace.

"I will try," whispered a soft, infinitely sweet voice.

"I know you will!"

"I'll try to be strong, although I have little courage."

"You're a brave girl!"

"When?"

"Soon!"

"You'll send me word!"

"You'll feel it!"

"Yes, I'll feel it!"

"Farewell!"

Ackermann waited a while until the house door closed.

## BOOK II

### 1.

YOUNG HEINZ'S body was brought back to Berlin. He was laid to rest on a bright spring day. The flying unit had sent Meerheim with a wreath. The funeral procession was only a small one. The mother followed her son's casket without a tear in her eye, the sisters wept softly and timidly. At a little distance behind the others walked Clara, black-robed, heavily veiled like a widow, her narrow shoulders convulsed with incessant sobs. Heinz's friends, students, mere boys, sang the fallen soldier's favorite song: "*Deutschland, Deutschland über alles!*" His mother had so wished it. She herself joined in the song, the while gazing with an exalted smile into the infinite space of the Spring heaven.

Young Meerheim made a short address, in an unmoved, sharp military tone of voice: eight days later he himself was killed in an air battle.

Heinz had fallen—barely nineteen years of age.

Clara rolled her handkerchief into a ball and stuffed it between her teeth.

Strange, and she hadn't the slightest presentiment! The evening before their star had sparkled so brilliantly and full of promise.

It happened the morning after Dora's fête—just at the hour she had fallen asleep. Meerheim had seen the machine plunge.

A few days earlier—she remembered it quite well—she had dreamed of Heinz. He was standing on the field, her little green woolen cap on his head, and the sun's rays fell

upon the medallion on his breast. He was playing with a little dachshund, and swarms of terrifying-looking aeroplanes, painted in the most barbaric colors, raced away above his head. But he seemed not to see them, he played with the dog,—how could one have a presentiment from this dream?

She had gone to sleep after coming home from Dora's fête with no anxiety, nay, even with a feeling of perfect security, happy and hopeful.

One day she went downtown. According to her custom she bought at random a lot of papers at one of the subway newsstands. Like many other persons, she had become a fanatical devourer of newspapers; it had grown to be a veritable disease with her. Suddenly it seemed to her as if she had seen his name somewhere in one of the papers! Incredible, to be sure—and yet had he not said to her often: "Look out, one day you'll suddenly see my name in the papers and how surprised you'll be!" She began to search and sure enough—there was his name: "Heinz Sterne-Doenhoff." She read and at first didn't grasp it. "Less than a year ago his father, Major Sterne-Doenhoff, met a hero's death . . ." She read the signatures in the death notice and then she suddenly understood.

She threw her bundle of papers onto the seat and ran like mad through the car.

"He's dead," she cried, "let me out!"

"But you see that the train's in full motion, you can't get out," said the men who barricaded the door. "You'll break your neck, dear Miss!"

Just then the train stopped at a station and Clara rushed out.

"It's something terrible, this sort of scene is enacted every day. Yesterday a woman threw herself before the train at the Spittelmarkt station and was run over. I tell you—it was terrible—that shriek!"

"Stop, I can't listen to such things any longer!"

Poor little Clara, even to-day she had not fully grasped it.

Now, she had made up her mind to venture. God be with you!

She pressed the bell and handed in her card. This card had a black edge. Clara was so thickly veiled that her face was barely to be seen.

After a noticeably long time the maid returned and asked her to come in. Frau von Sterne-Doenhoff and her two daughters were in the room. Ah, their faces, the resemblance to Heinz in every line. . . .

"To what do we owe this honor?" asked Frau von Sterne-Doenhoff, with a searching look from her long yellowish face.

"I'm—" stammered Clara, "I'd like very much—"

"I'm afraid I don't understand you!" said the mother softly. "Won't you be seated?"

The sisters, evidently embarrassed, stared at Clara.

"I only wished," began Clara anew, "to call upon you—" and suddenly she began to sob.

"What's the matter with you, my dear Miss?"

Silence.

"I am his fiancée!"

Again silence.

As no one spoke Clara continued: "I was his beloved!"

But here the Frau Major interrupted her. Coolly and formally she said: "My son had no secrets from me. . . . Leave the room!" She was speaking now to the two sisters, who obediently did as they were told.

"What is it you say? 'His beloved'?" The mother lowered her voice.

"Yes,—his beloved."

"But do you know what you are saying?"

"Perfectly!"

"Then you mean to say,"—the mother halted—"you certainly can't mean to say that you lived with Heinz?"

Clara started and raised her helpless wounded eyes to the grayish-blue eyes. She flushed. "No, not that—" again she stammered. "No, I didn't mean that!"

And now a faint flush spread over the long yellow face of the mother. Relieved and in a somewhat friendlier tone she said: "Then I thank you for your very kind visit, my dear young lady!" She even tried to invest her voice with a certain warmth and cordiality. But as Clara continued to gaze at her with her uncomprehending eyes, she added in a whisper: "Have you perhaps, any claims to make upon us?"

The wounded eyes of the young girl were fastened upon her face uncomprehendingly.

Then the mother smiled and stretched out her hand. "Thank you again, my child. What's your name?"

But Clara gave no answer, her eyes glowed. Not for the world would she have touched this terrible long yellow hand. She drew back, bowed low, very low and left the room. The two sisters were peeping through a crack in the door. "It's her hair he wore in the medallion," whispered one of them, and the mother's voice called "Emma, Bertha!" Clara was again standing on the stairs.

Ah, and this foolish little Clara had thought it all out at home, how she would fall on her knees before the mother and the sisters, and say to them that she had come to share their grief. She wished to kiss their hands and weep with them.

She was only a child and knew nothing of a mother's jealousy.

Stupefied and still wholly uncomprehending, she went down the steps. They were the steps over which his feet had hurried. She touched them caressingly with the tips of her fingers. She would have liked to kiss them, but just at this moment a perambulator was wheeled out of one of the doors into the hall, and she fled.

But she came again when she knew that the ladies were out and knelt down and kissed the steps.

She came three times in the course of the next few weeks, creeping through the entrance like a thief. Once it had grown quite dark in the house. After that she came no more.

Paradise had sunk out of sight, nothing remained but darkness, infinite darkness—and in the midst of this unending darkness stood she, Clara, with her hands pressed to her throbbing heart.

Whenever her father was at home she was obliged to discard her mourning. She wished to avoid papa's questions. As it was, he at times looked at her searchingly when they were sitting at the table; her eyes were red from weeping, lusterless, her cheeks colorless. Papa, her poor papa, who without this was so noticeably excited and agitated of late. Hedi's lack of consideration seemed to affect him more than he cared to show.

Yes, Hedi had actually decided to leave home. At first she came very irregularly, would send a messenger with a note—unexpected work. Gradually she stopped coming altogether. Quite impossible, the long distance—and work, day and night; one must be within reach.

The Privy Councillor—Clara would never have believed it possible—accepted the situation without making the least resistance.

It is true he walked about the house evidently perturbed, cracked his fingers, tugged at his thin mustache. He undoubtedly had his misgivings, strong misgivings! A Herr Stroebel or a Herr von Stroebel—grown rich during the war—ahem! But after all, he himself had no means and because he had no money his career was as good as ended—the same writing desk, the same rack of papers, the same cuspidor—until he was retired on a pension.

Yes, what was there to be done? Again he cracked his fingers.

In the present state of affairs he could not offer his daughters anything better than he was now doing. They would have to look out for themselves.

In short, there was nothing to be done about it.

And moreover, he had cares of his own at this time, quite other cares! His nights were sleepless. A tremendous piece of bad luck, if it could be so called, had befallen him; one of his duties at the Foreign Office was to represent Germany's interests in three distant foreign countries. To this end, with the assistance of a university professor, he edited a correspondence sheet of which, it must be admitted, the press made but very little use—indeed, one could safely say that the press made no use of it whatever—unfortunately. Now as it happened, one of these three foreign countries had declared war upon Germany and this fact had wholly escaped the Privy Councillor! Indeed, the last number of the correspondence sheet had carried a very encouraging and laudatory article from the pen of his valued collaborator, despite the fact that Germany had been on a war footing with this country for the past three weeks! What a misfortune. If his ministerial chief should notice it? However, several weeks had already elapsed and no one seemed to have observed the slip. Possibly this cup also would pass from his lips!

These were the worries of the Privy Councillor, and it was naturally quite impossible for him to occupy himself with his daughter's affairs. And after all, it was no disgrace for Hedi to learn to use a typewriter and write letters on it: as a matter of fact she was better paid than he was. Things seemed to be going well with her; had she not recently sent him the leg of a goose done in aspic jelly? And as for the rest, Hedi's character was sufficient guarantee for him . . .

Clara's wild grief had even driven her to Hedi at this time, although she had sworn not to have anything to do with her sister in the future.

But she met with very little sympathy from Hedi. The latter was occupied in doing over her apartment. A new coffer-work ceiling was being put into the salon—gilt squares between cross-beams of ultramarine. No, Hedi displayed very little sympathy for Clara's grief. She offered her a spring hat. She pretended sympathy, but Clara felt only too distinctly . . .

Then the idea occurred to her of calling upon Ruth. Ruth? Why Ruth? She had never spoken to her but once—barely knew her—but instinctively she sought solace from her.

But as it happened Ruth was not at home! At that moment the General stepped out into the hall: "My daughter is not at home!" he said, and Clara thought she detected a bitter ring in his voice. This reception hall was very stately and solemn. Dark portraits in broad frames, a huge mirror, and at each side the bronze figure of a negro bearing tall candles. The General seemed to observe her suspiciously, his gaze was searching and disconcerting, just like that of Frau von Sterne-Doenhoff.

But now where should she go?

Finally the idea occurred to her of going to see Dora. She opened her heart to Dora! But she found Dora also lacking in genuine understanding of her grief. She kissed her, took her in her arms and pressed her to her heart. She tried to console her—said it was a crime to send children like Heinz into the shambles—but, she had a seamstress in the house and her head was full of her spring and summer wardrobe . . . you see, one must be thinking of summer. Then Otto arrived, and Otto looked at her curiously, and this Clara found intolerable.

She left.



Alone, the little widow had to bear her grief, quite alone. She was too young to know that one always has to bear one's grief alone.

Day after day and often until late at night she wandered about the streets in desperation. The flags were for him—my beloved, my hero—the solemn salute of the bells was for him! Never would she even touch the hand of another man! She was his widow.

Formerly she had been friendly to every one, even to the dogs on the street. Now she wandered about without raising her eyes.

Newspapers, extras! The crowds ran, stormed, tore the papers greedily in pieces—what mattered it to her? Even the subway trains were deluged with newspapers. The fist-fight for a place in the cars had grown less intense of late—it was not impossible that very soon things would be quite different. Victories, victories! Every day a new one! A little stenographer died one day in the corner of the car—quietly, without making a sound. She grew paler and paler and by the time the train ran into the Spittelmarkt station she was dead. She was carried out.

Dead? Yes, perhaps that was the best thing?

During these terrible days Clara seemed never to grow weary, although she never closed her eyes at night. For at night the consoling tears flowed freely. Quite at random she wandered through the dark streets. Shadows staggered towards her, shadows crawled along in front of her, shadows plunged along behind her. Suddenly Clara started back afrighted: an old moth-eaten gray horse was standing in the middle of the pavement.

She stood on the banks of the quiet canal in a section of the city wholly strange to her. A light beckoned to her from the dark current, deep down. The dark houses at her back gradually seemed to move and stagger. Corpses of signboards, corpses of gigantic letters, wandered by slowly, infinitely slowly. Abandoned vehicles, abandoned booths,

abandoned rowboats; the plague had snatched the people away in the midst of their work.

Then terrifying laughter resounded across the dark silent waters, an uncanny laugh, the laugh of a madman—Clara shuddered. She found herself back of the old palace, and it seemed to her as if the laughter had come from this gloomy fortress. An icy breath issued from the silent, dead palace. It seemed to be deserted, occupied only by ghosts, who breathed out this terrible chill. Was not something staring out of the window at her? And there—its icy hand stretched through the walls and touched her heart.

Clara fled. The laugh of a madman echoed behind her.

Finally light. A moving picture theater. A stout woman selling newspapers ran by the dazzling posters, shrieking hoarsely and incessantly: "Twenty-thousand prisoners—battle still in progress—"

## 2.

### Fog.

A curious thing: rain the entire day, towards evening a little sunlight and moist wind, and now, at night, fog.

Herr Herbst sneezed as he turned the corner. He had taken cold. The fog was still more impenetrable in this street. An uncanny giant came stamping towards him, wrapped in several thicknesses of fur, with a high fur cap pulled down over the thick skull, but the figure shrank more and more, until finally it was only a harmless little man passing him. A fire in the middle of the street and dancing cannibals around the fire: no reason for anxiety, it is only the street workmen repairing the street-car tracks.

The fog rolled on like a turbid ocean, and pushed rubbish along before it—houses, streets, city districts, suburbs, ever farther, until it reached the flat country where there were nothing but potato fields and telegraph poles.

He also was pushed unresistingly forward by the turbid

ocean, just as were the houses and city boroughs with their entire population. His nose dripped, he walked rapidly, his knees somewhat bent, his arms hanging down loosely. He was tired, dog-tired. He had been on his feet the entire day.

He'd thought out a new plan—a devilish one!

Yes, a devilish one!

Wherever he walked or drove he would see him—all the time, at every hour of the day he was to be reminded of—that!

But as he stopped to sneeze again, the thick dirty cloud of fog lifted a little and—who would have believed it?—he saw a small luxuriant garden lying in the bright sunlight. He himself was walking in this garden, in a white summer coat, a gold watch-chain across his waist-coat, a broad-brimmed sunburned panama upon his head. Just as distinct as anything! The odor of coffee was in the air, it was Sunday, he could even smell the fresh starch in the shirt he had on. Soon the little mother—the same little mother, who later, much later . . . but who could have foreseen it then?—soon the little mother would come with the coffee pot, the tips of her fingers somewhat greasy, her lips glistening with grease . . .

Just at this moment Herr Herbst collided with some one who cried: "Look out!" The garden vanished and the fog swirled on. The collision was so violent that his stiff hat was jammed down still further over his ears and he staggered from the impact. But this angry shout: "Look out!"—this dry voice, how about it?

Shyly he turned and looked; immediately he recognized the green plush hat and the tightly buttoned overcoat! In the yellowish vapor of a street lamp stood the consumptive young man, in close conversation with two men carrying clubs. The little plush hat shook, the thin arms gesticulated excitedly—and then they vanished from the light of the street lamp and were swallowed up in the fog.

Herbst's heart beat loudly.

And so they had come as far as this, as far as this?

He trembled and made a dodging movement.

Somber lay the gray house, steaming in the fog and only a light in the one window, as it was every night.

As softly as usual Herr Herbst stole up to his room.

Thank God that he was here! So tired . . . !

He could hear Frau Hachnlein praying in her room. With a sobbing, despairing voice—but softly in order not to waken the children—she implored God's help, called upon Heaven to help her, yes, help . . .

The misery of this city was as fathomless as the deep sea, in every house, in every street. Everywhere, the unhappy, the desperate, the weeping, and the sleepless. From every house the eyes of the demented burned into the fog.

The humpbacked host of the inn was right: the great visitation was now abroad upon the face of the earth. Men were sinners. Sin! Sin! As bottomless as the ocean! And he also, even he, had heaped sin upon sin in his life! He repented—already he repented, he was treading the stony path of repentance.

All this little Herr Herbst thought as he crawled into bed, shivering with cold. His face burned like fire, and the darkness encircled him with scintillating sparks. He was again tormented by a heavy cough and he drew the covers up over his head in order to make no noise. When he could again draw a long breath he heard voices in Ackermann's room.

These voices bubbled, just as did the fog at the window, up and down, one a hoarse, panting voice, the other deep, clear, as if trying to pacify some one. Every now and then an amused, a somewhat unsteady, laugh.

The clear reassuring voice, that was Ackermann, but the hoarse, panting one, which at times laughed in a so strange amused manner? That was Haehnlein! Yes, no other than he—laughing, would you believe it? While his wife im-

plored the help and the compassion of God, at least for her poor little children.

"To-morrow? So soon?" asked Ackermann.

"Yes, to-morrow at ten!" Again the somewhat tipsy laugh.

The voices bubbled on without cessation.

Little Herr Herbst steamed from the heat. His head smoked, his hands, yes, as has been said, he had taken cold. He sat up in bed with his head slightly bowed, stupefied, without a thought. He was obliged to listen to the bubbling of the voices, which seemed to cast a spell over him, although he was not in the least interested in what the two had to say.

"How is it possible?" cried Ackermann.

And with a hoarse laugh Haehnlein answered: "Yes, how is it possible? Ha—ha!"

Despite the fact that the blood in his head was hissing like steam he soon grasped the reason of Haehnlein's excitement. He had been examined again and to-morrow a transport was being sent to the front. The "Murder Commission" had been in the barracks. Back to the front, once more—yes, the shell splinter which had struck his skull so that he could no longer walk up stairs without holding fast to the railing—that didn't count. And the wound in the breast he had received in Serbia—that also didn't count. And three times in France, twice in Russia, in Serbia—all that didn't count. His wife—his children—? Nothing counted!

He would again be packed in a cattle car; to the front he must go.

Ackermann tried to console him.

"Ha—ha!" laughed Haehnlein. His counsel made but little impression upon him.

"Yes, throw it at their feet, at their feet!" screamed Ackermann, loudly and wildly.

"But what then, Ackermann?" asked Haehnlein. "Lis-

ten: prison—ask Comrade Schmidt, who gave the corporal a box on the ear. Rather a hero's death than prison. Hunger and the lash!"

"The maniacs!" screamed Ackermann.

Haehnlein again gave a loud laugh. And although Herbst was glowing with fever, he shivered as he heard it.

Had he, Ackermann, forgotten the penal company? The devils of superiors—criminals—convict uniforms—spit upon by honest comrades—penal labor under fire, hunger, beatings, lice, sickness . . .

And so you've got to go? thought Herr Herbst. It's a good thing that you're going!

He had grown afraid of Haehnlein of late. Yesterday he met him on the stairs: he stood there motionless, staring, one foot in the air, his glittering eyes fastened upon the floor. He had not dared to pass him and had turned around and gone back.

Just so she had stood, precisely so—that time—in the corners, at first in the middle of the room, finally only in the corners and underneath the doorway—before she, ahem! before she . . .

It's just as well that you're getting out of this house . . .

Just then he came very near laughing out loud! Haehnlein was talking about the inspection; of the skeletons, cripples, crooked and lame, and he, lying there in his bed, could see everything quite clearly and distinctly before his eyes. How they hobbled along, how they crawled, how the sharp bones stuck through their skin. Well, one of them got off; he fell in convulsions and had to be carried away.

Then came that other one, a giant in stature, who spat blood into his open palm and showed it to the physician. But the physician, oh, no, he was not in the least at a loss for an answer. He said, the physician: "The air at the front is better than it is in Berlin; so long as a man isn't carrying his head under his arm he must go. That's all there is to it!" And then came that other one, who had an open wound

on his back, into which you could stick your whole finger—but that didn't help him any. "Go right along," said the physician; "such things heal rapidly when one is young." No, he was never at a loss for an answer, you had to admit that!—But now, now came the turn of Haehnlein, our Haehnlein. Nothing that he could put forward was of the least help. "His shot through the lung, his shortage of breath—wonderfully healed," said the physician; "indoor air is not good for you." But the dizzy spells resulting from the shell splinter in his head, the trembling—nothing helped poor Haehnlein. "Are only the sound men to be shot dead?" asked the physician. Ha—ha! Quite right, why only the sound ones?

Yes, Haehnlein was in a nice fix, and still seemed unable to grasp it.

Again the voices bubbled. For a long time. Not a word to be understood. Then Haehnlein again gave a loud laugh, and the voices passed out into the corridor.

"Courage, comrade!" cried Ackermann's voice.

Haehnlein laughed and said something. He crept by Herbst's door whistling softly to himself.

Frau Haehnlein's praying stopped instantly. She pretended to be asleep and even snored a little. After a while she asked: "What are you doing?"

"I'm smoking a cigar!" said Haehnlein very quietly.

And then it grew still, quite still. The time had now come for him, Herr Herbst, to taste his triumph!

Softly his bed floated on, an agreeable heat boiled in his veins, the breath came hot from his mouth. Superb, intoxicating, red sparkled the darkness. The fog swirled against the window, up and down, pressed itself against the window-panes. And down there: hark! Yes, he could distinctly hear their steps, hollow like the beat of the heart in his breast. There they walked up and down; the men with the clubs, the little green plush hat hurried up the street through the fog,—investigating, controlling.

And he there, next door, suspected nothing! He rustled

his papers, tore them to pieces, rattled on his typewriter, unsuspecting. Did he not see the green plush hat hurrying up the street? No, no, he was blind, he was deaf.

Now he rattled the stove door, and there was the smell of burning paper. And the steps down there passed up and down, louder, ever louder . . .

Should he knock at the door and call out to him: "Listen—listen! Open the window and look at it hurrying up the street . . . !"

But no, the hour had now come, the blissful hour, when he would have his fill of triumph!

To-day—ho! ho! to-day he had plucked up courage to do it! Taken off his hat, quite close to him, quite close! He had waited in front of the house in the Lessing Allee, until the gray limousine drove up. And then—taken off his hat, as already said. He had stepped into the light of the automobile lamps, in the dazzling circle of light made by the lamps!

And the General? He was frightened—frightened, would you believe it?—of him, an impotent old man without rank or title: a drunkard who was rapidly going down hill, down hill more and more every day—he the powerful—was frightened! He started back, his eyes filled with terror . . .

Yes, no longer any consideration, not the slightest! Day and night he would suddenly pop up before the General's eyes, not a step should he take from now on—he would be there!

And how frightened he was! How he started back! He could still see it quite distinctly. The broad set face flinched; it was not fright, it was horror that was mirrored on his features. The General staggered back a few steps—he ran! And he, Herbst, ran after him with his hat in his hand. How fast he could run! In his coat with the red facings. In his trousers with the red stripes! How he was driven forward by horror, and yet it was as easy as anything to follow him. Faster, ever faster, the two ran



into the red sparkling darkness. And the fog thundered on! Bales of smoke were spewed out by the black city, bales and bales of it—like a volcano. The clouds of smoke thundered sky-high.

## 3.

The fog swirled over Berlin. Above the fog sparkled the eternal stars, but they were hidden from sight, so deep was the city sunk in the turbid ocean.

Wrapped in dense clouds of vapor, the trains howled shrilly as they felt their way along. The arc lamps sweated in the mist-filled stations, gigantic shadows struck their heads against the glass roofs of the sheds. Ambulances crawled out into the yellowish ocean of fog and at times the chauffeurs drew back, startled by the yawning fissures which suddenly seemed to cleave the streets. Here and there flabby, dirty flags could be discerned in the clouds of fog.

The ambulances were unloaded in foggy courtyards, and the feverish eyes of the wounded gazed hopefully into the light of the corridors, filled with the odor of carbolic acid, through which the stretchers were carried.

And the trains howled and moaned as they had done for more than a thousand nights. But during these days of the great offensive they came in uninterruptedly. The physicians exchanged glances . . .

Just at the time that little Herr Herbst, in his delirium of fever, was pursuing the General, the latter was sitting in a comfortable armchair in front of his writing desk with a satisfied expression on his face. He was bent over a large General-Staff map.

Near him stood a little bowl of blue paint and a glass of water, and he was painting blue lines on the map. Now and then he took up a magnifying glass to look for some place mentioned in the telephone report.

Incredible! Had they wings? Was it not precisely as it had been at the time of the 1914 advance?

Already the strategic picture had become clearer—crystal-clear. The General bent over the map! His own views had not always harmonized with those of the higher authorities, he admitted that; it had been impossible for him to share the unconditional faith of the majority, he had deplored the lack of daring strategic ideas, deplored the lack of genuine genius. But now he surrendered. Yes! Unconditionally.

And the General stared at the white cardboard, while the fog grew denser outside. Now he bent close over the table, his eyeglasses adjusted, now he leaned back thoughtfully in his chair, and then again stared motionlessly at the map. What did he see? He saw brigades, divisions, army corps, the girdle of artillery. He saw how the brigades, divisions, and army corps ate their way forward, the columns on the highroads, the heavy artillery bringing up the rear, the flying squadrons in the air, the staffs; all this he saw on the white card.

His hand carried the blue line forward—yes, the right flank was already at the sea, the channel, while on the left flank the tenuous silhouette of the Eiffel Tower was visible on the horizon.

To-day the shells were falling on the French capital, terrible monitors, history was knocking portentously on the gates of Paris. And London? Soon history would be knocking at the gates of London! The kingdom of the great Alexander, what had become of it? The world empire of the Romans and Spanish? Débris! The current of history roared incessantly, and new kingdoms emerged from the waves.

The General sank into dreamy contemplation. His stern features had relaxed. To-day it was as good as certain that the enemy's reserves had been exhausted. They had nothing more . . . terrible perspective . . .

Separated from the General by a corridor, by a couple of thin walls, sat Ruth with feverish cheeks, bent over her beloved books, which to her signified the Evangel, while the fog clung to the window panes. It was already late in the night. She wrote, made notes, her eyes glistened. Yes, these books, these pamphlets, they spoke the truth! They alone pointed out the right way. This ruling class, which only maintained itself by means of slavery, pillage and tyranny, must go. This war was the terribly logical conclusion of their labors—what a finale! A new class would come to the surface, a better, purer, nobler. Its heralds were already on the way. But here Ruth shuddered.

Yes, already! Her glance wandered to the window, now shrouded in fog, her eyes were filled with unrest and misery. Uncertain was the future. She would not see him for a long time, perhaps not for years! But it had to be so, there had to be courageous souls who staked everything for the idea and the faith! She loved him, she respected him! She would follow his example. She would renounce everything, money, comfort, social position. She wished for none of these. She wished to be like millions of women who were earning their own living, nothing else. She had slowly brought herself around to this way of thinking. A thousand blessed conversations had given her insight, clarity and purpose!

She could not help it if she thereby humiliated papa, Otto, her relations—no, it was irrevocable! What stupidity, superficiality, what darkness of vision, what madness—no, away, away with it all!

And yet her heart ached. She arose and began to pace the room, her hands on her hips, up and down, up and down, her eyes dumb with misery—up and down, the whole night long.

And Dora—what was Dora doing in this night of impenetrable fog? She slept and laughed in her sleep. And Clara

also, the little unhappy Clara, slept, but she wept in her sleep, her cheeks were quite wet.

But on this foggy night Hedi was in the gayest spirits. She was dancing the tango with Weisbach in the library, adjoining the room where a small company was gambling. The phonograph could scarcely be heard, because the cover was down, but Hedi loved it this way, she thought it more romantic. Stroebe! had just told her that he was one of the few men in Europe who could stand for anything—so she danced the tango with Weisbach, and Weisbach, who had drunk very little this evening, had told her that he loved her and would marry her on the spot. That amused Hedi and now and then she permitted his gaze to sink into her eyes, quite deep. She had resolved to make this little dark artilleryman completely crazy about her. And then? Well, who knows?

And Otto? He sat in his room in West Berlin with a little shopgirl on his knee—some one whom he had picked up on the street—a bottle of wine at his elbow. He kissed the full, bluish-white neck of the little one, and she asked him how a shell sounded. Her fiancé also was at the front. Otto laughed—superb, this naïveté. What did it matter to him that the fog encircled the house?

#### 4.

Little Herr Herbst was still running along in pursuit of the coat with the red facings, still running through the purplish darkness.

Gradually the darkness merged into twilight, he no longer ran, he walked more slowly—and the General? It wasn't the General at all, it was his neighbor, Haehnlein. He recognized him by his shabby military coat, his protruding white ears, his thin neck. He walked slowly, always a few steps in advance of Herbst, crisscross through the streets.

He was evidently looking for something. But finally—ah, yes, now he had found it.

He stopped before a shop where knives were sold. Knives, nothing but knives, sparkling and gleaming like sharp teeth. Haehnlein encircled this shop, he read the sign, wrinkled his brow. Then he withdrew to the gutter, one foot in the street, one on the pavement. There he drew out his purse and carefully inspected its contents. With a determined air he entered the shop. But before he closed the door he cast a glance at the street, a searching feverish sad glance. For what was he looking? For help?

What, here, among the hurrying crowds, all of whom were being driven forward by their own misery, here? Well, he realized that it was futile to look for help in such a place and closed the door behind him. (Herbst peeped through the pane of glass!) He chose a long heavy carving knife, sharp and pointed, and left the shop with a narrow package under his arm. Rapidly he returned home, at times he ran for a short distance, rapidly he ran up the steps.

But what now? It was quite dark again in the adjoining room, suddenly it was night again, and only Haehnlein's shadow could be seen, his protruding white ears and his wicked gleaming eyes. He, Herbst, lay again in his bed, with closed eyes, but in spite of that he could see through the wall everything that Haehnlein was doing. Now Haehnlein's shadow bent over the sleeping children, for a long time, then over the sleeping woman. Suddenly the knife blade glistened. It gleamed horribly in the darkness. The woman moved and Haehnlein hastily concealed the handle under his coat. He stood there for a long time without making a movement.

But then he bent over the sleeping children, the knife sparkled—bloody spots were now to be seen on the blade. He stood there breathing heavily. He then bent over the sleeping woman, and again the knife sparkled. Finally he stood up. Not a sound!

Now he was busied with something else. He fastened his glistening malicious glances upon Herbst who lay in his bed in the next room. Could he see him? It was impossible with the wall between them. But he nevertheless seemed to see him. He felt along the wall with his hand—wrinkled his brow in disappointment and rage. Then Herbst (why did he?) began to snicker derisively. Haehnlein laughed contemptuously and felt his way along the wall to the door.

Suddenly Herbst sat up straight in bed and his heart stood still with fright. He gave a wild scream.

He came! He saw him coming, the knife between his teeth.

The door was already being slowly opened, his hand was visible—again Herbst gave a scream—and now he entered.

However, he carried no knife, but only a candle. And it was not Haehnlein at all, but—Ackermann.

"Are you sick? Why are you screaming so?" asked Ackermann and came closer, in his hand a little candlestick.

Herbst endeavored to articulate, but his tongue stuck to his gums.

Ackermann went out and came back bringing a glass of water.

"Here, drink this. You have fever. You're red-hot!"

"I'm freezing," answered Herbst, and his teeth chattered. "I'm as cold as ice. I must be as white as snow!"

"You're red-hot, I tell you. Here, drink this! Why did you scream so?"

"I was dreaming of dead people."

Ackermann smiled. "You needn't have any fear of the dead!"

Herbst trembled and fixed his feverish eyes upon Ackermann.

"And the foot-steps," he whispered, "the whole night long. In front of the house. Didn't you see the little green hat?"

"Do drink this!"

"Flee, I tell you! They are there!"

To his eyes Ackermann was young and fresh, an apparition from another world. The evil spirits populating this earth could have no power over him. His eyes glistened, his mouth glowed a deep red, he seemed to be neither weary nor sleepy although it was late in the night. He smiled gayly as if he heard nothing of the foot-steps in front of the house, no, they certainly couldn't do him any harm. He floated on clouds like an angel. He was a messenger of God, who had come to his room to give him a glass of water.

The candle vanished. Again it was dark in the room.

Yes, he had been tormented by a dream, a dream full of evil and terror. Had he dreamed of the buried soldier who worked his way out of the mountain of loam, or of Robert from whose wounds the blood was flowing? He was still shaken by fright.

One thing was certain, this house was a house of evil omen! an accursed house. Its walls were undermined by misery and tears. Even the dead could find no rest here. Every night the dead letter-carrier glided through the entrance hall, disseminating his evil odor.

He had died, this old letter-carrier, a veteran wearing the medals of the glorious war of the '70's, and no one knew anything about it. Not until a sharp sweetish odor filled the house had he been found stretched upon the floor. Now every night he crept through the halls and at times rang the doorbell, whereupon the women screamed.

Yes, an accursed house.

But, thank God, the terrible chill had somewhat abated. He already felt somewhat warmer, a delicious glow began to spread over his body. The house breathed peacefully, he could distinctly hear the Haehnlein family breathing on the other side of the wall. His eyes burned. They grew wider and wider and he sat there in the rustling darkness with fiery eyes as large as wagon-wheels.

Suddenly he heard an organ booming in deep, solemn

tones. And above the roaring of the organ a voice cried:

"Sacred is Man! The Be-all and End-all of the Earth!

"Sacred is human life, inviolable!"

And again the organ pealed.

Then the same voice cried loud and clear:

"Human dignity is the highest law!

"Inviolable is the dignity of man!

"Sacred his thoughts, sacred his body!

"Love one another!"

The organ tones died away in the distance.

## 5.

As the fog swirled over the roofs of the city, the phonograph in Stroebel's library was still playing. But Hedi was no longer dancing. She was sitting at the card table, staking heavily. Red spots appeared on her cheeks, her eyes sparkled. She won. Now and then Stroebel caressed her with a glance, and at this moment she loved him. She had entirely forgotten Weisbach who tried to catch her eye.

Otto's girl had fallen asleep. Two tears glistened like dewdrops under her long dark lashes. Otto sat over the last glass of wine, leisurely smoking a cigar. He needed no sleep, although his work kept him from morning to night in the office.

Ruth still walked restlessly up and down, her eyes filled with misery. She tottered, so weary was she, but she could not make up her mind to go to bed.

But the General slept. He snored and murmured now and again unintelligible words in his dreams. Wangel and Jacob were hurriedly packing the trunks and he was instructing them what to do. He had just received the telegram, in forty minutes the train was leaving for the front . . .

And the fog floated outside. The fog steamed over the whole of Germany, impenetrable. Above gleamed the



eternal stars, but Germany didn't see them. The trains wailed through the foggy night, all over Germany, transports, bearing men who had been shot to pieces, rolled on through forest and fields, over bridges and rivers, endlessly, unceasingly.

Over the faces of Europe whirled the impenetrable fog. Up there the eternal stars sparkled, but Europe saw them not. Like a sea of blood the fog rolled along; in Europe's rivers flowed only blood.

The old men who guided the destiny of the nations slumbered in their beds.

But already the fog was lightening. Day was dawning.

During the night Ackermann had gone through his papers and burned everything of a compromising character. The stove smoldered and the little room was filled with smoke.

He opened the window. The fog floated in, and could be distinctly seen circling around the tiny candle-light. Now the balls of vapor began to grow lighter, dawn was near. Silence, no step, no sound. The city was completely dead.

Ackermann blew out the candle and lay down to rest.

But the fog followed him in his dreams: he saw a soldier in field-gray, like thousands of others he had seen. This soldier, wrapped in a wide army coat, with a little crushed trench cap upon his head, was at work quite alone in the midst of a broad smoking field.

It was so dark that at times the figure of the soldier was barely to be discerned. He was tall, his bony face framed in a short scrubby beard. Without once raising his eyes, he turned the earth over with his spade. A huge stone buried in the ground became visible, and gradually one could gain some idea of the size of the stone. It was about as large as a turntable upon which locomotives were moved. At times it seemed somewhat smaller, then again larger. At all events it was enormously large and it was impossible to say how deep down it extended into the ground.

The soldier now took a crowbar—a heavy shaft with an iron mounting—rammed it against the stone and threw his entire weight against it. The stone didn't budge. Undaunted, the soldier again took his pike and spade in his hand and dug a still deeper hole about the stone. He threw up a whole mountain of dirt and it was marvelous to see how steadily, quietly and absorbedly he worked. Again he applied the heavy crowbar. See there, the stone moved the least little bit!

A tiny crack was visible in the ground around the edge of the stone; there could be no doubt that the stone had moved! Again the soldier threw his whole weight against the crowbar. Now for the first time he turned his full face towards Ackermann. It could be plainly seen that it was bathed in sweat, the sweat had gathered in the eyes, until they seemed to be as white as snow. With a tremendous effort, the soldier pressed down on the crowbar, the veins of his temple swelled—ah, the stone begins to move more readily. It had sunk deeper on one side, barely noticeable, and on the other it stood higher in the air.

The soldier wiped the sweat from his face with his sleeve, and bravely resumed his evidently hopeless task.

Yes, what is that? He stops shoveling and puts his hand to his cheek. He discovers a bloody scratch, and the blood runs in a thin thread down over his neck. The soldier shakes his head in astonishment. It is very strange, what is happening? Suddenly a piece of his gray coat is torn away: Ah, he is under fire, he is working under fire, thought Ackermann, he is being fired at. A moment later he sees quite clearly a gaping wound on the man's temple. The blood gushes forth, and in a trice half of his face is covered with blood. But the soldier works on steadily. He presses against the crowbar with all his might, and only now and then he passes his sleeve over his face when the blood begins to trouble him.

Then a miracle happens: he has succeeded in raising the

gigantic stone into an oblique position. Like a madman he throws himself against it with his back and tries to raise the gigantic block completely out of the earth. It moves—a little—and then the stone drops back into its old position.

The soldier begins his task anew, undaunted. His hands and face are covered with blood and sweat, but he takes no notice of this. Suddenly his army tunic is torn open over the chest, he lays his big hand on his chest, and instantly blood gushes from his mouth. But after a moment he again resumes his work. Again he presses his back against the crowbar; see there, he succeeds in raising it, impossible as it seems. Now it stands obliquely like a roof, but all further efforts are futile. The soldier walks around the stone, shakes his head, wipes the blood from his face and his blood-soaked coat, shovels and makes new desperate efforts, but the stone refuses to budge another inch.

But now what happens? Some one comes, some one joins him. It is a little man, also a soldier, with quick imperious movements. Evidently a superior officer. He gesticulates violently and goads the soldier on to work. And suddenly Ackermann remembers that this little man with the imperious gestures had already been visible once before in the fog. But only for a moment.

Again the soldier pushes with all his strength against the gigantic stone, but it doesn't move. Again he turns his face to Ackermann. It is covered with blood, as is also his chest, his eyes are suffused with blood, and every time he makes a supreme effort the blood gushes from his lips. Suddenly—suddenly the little man with the imperious gestures springs up angrily, swings a short leathern whip and—ah!—strikes the soldier full across the face. He strikes again and again until he works himself up to a mad rage. The soldier, however, only redoubles, trebles, his efforts. He totters, staggers back a few steps and falls to the ground. He lies there motionless without making a sound.

Has he fainted? Is he dead?

The little man with the imperious gestures goes up to the soldier. He kicks the shoulder of the motionless man with his boot. He has suddenly grown much smaller, just as the man in the field-gray has grown much larger. The imperious little man is now like a dwarf compared to the gigantic stature of the soldier. He climbs upon the motionless figure, in order to look in his face. He stands on his chest, swinging his whip and screaming . . .

But the motionless, blood-covered figure doesn't answer. His teeth gleam in the fog. There is his spade, his crow-bar, there the half-raised stone towering through the fog. But he moves no more, nor does he answer.

His silence throws the little man with the quick imperious gestures into a perfect rage. He climbs higher on the chest of the giant, holds fast by the collar of his coat and raises his foot in order to kick the motionless, blood-covered face with the gleaming teeth . . .

Just then Ackermann awoke.

It really was growing lighter. The morning light flowed by the window, as yellow as a turbid stream.

A wagon rattled along the street.

Since Ackermann had left him, little Herr Herbst had passed the remainder of the night between sleeping and waking. Possibly he had slept a little, but he was not conscious of it. His body was bathed in sweat, but the fever seemed to be broken.

The house lay still.

He always loved this silence just before daybreak. How often had he sat during this time in his bed, wringing his hands and weeping the liberating tears that had solaced him.

He could distinctly hear Ackermann tossing to and fro in his bed, but now it was quite still in his room. And in Haehnlein's room, also—quite still.

The dead letter-carrier, the veteran of '70, had to go back to the realm of shades before daylight; all ghosts must re-

treat before the light. Delicious was the gentle break of day.

But soon the crowded house began to stir. The house door creaked and cracked, and the porter stuck his gray, poodle-like head out into the morning mist. Doors slammed, and footsteps hurried down the stairs. One could hear knocking, calling, the splashing of water.

In Haehnlein's room—silence!

A short time before he had heard breathing behind the wall, but now it had grown quite still.

Not a sound!

Herbst rose and dressed himself in great haste. But while he was washing he lifted his little nose in the air several times. Gas, wasn't it? Yes, it smelled of gas.

Distinctly, clearly, he smelled the odor of gas.

The odor was still stronger in the hall. Fearfully he crept to the door.

Just at that moment Ackermann opened his door and stuck out his head. He also sniffed the air.

"It smells strongly of gas here?" he said.

"Yes, very strongly of gas!"

Ahem! Ackermann, half-dressed, stepped out into the hall.

"Did you leave your gas turned on?"

"I? No, no," answered Herbst, his hand already on the door latch.

"Perhaps Haehnlein?" asked Ackermann softly, hesitatingly, and his frightened look turned to Herbst.

"Perhaps—?"

"We'd better have a look!"

But Herr Herbst had not the slightest desire to see, no, not the slightest—this silence— He turned and ran down the steps. He could hear Ackermann's fist beating against Haehnlein's door.

Timidly he hurried along the foggy Ackerstrasse. He could now remember distinctly that he had dreamed of

Haehnlein. Distinctly! Quite distinctly! Haehnlein had dashed down stairs with a knife in one hand, yes, he could recall that quite distinctly—he had clung to the wall in order to get out of his way.

The ulster was soon lost in the labyrinth of streets, as it was every day.

## 6.

Behold Thy world, long-suffering one!

Hundreds and thousands flee this life daily, urged thereto by despair.

Open Thine eyes and behold: Misery!

Open Thine eyes and behold: Disgrace!

Listen! The shrieks of the tormentors, the shrieks of the martyrs, the wails of widows and orphans. Streams of tears flow by, curses darken the light of day.

Behold Thy people: Murderers!

The armies of duped slaves, driven forward by their deceivers, are still hacking each other to pieces. There are still shells, torpedoes, trench-mortars; men and women are still being shot; every day prisoners—what a word!—are being dragged away as slaves. Ships sink in the depths of the ocean; cathedrals go up in flames; thousands of innocent children starve to death daily. But the gilded crosses on the churches of Europe still gleam! And how long wilt Thou hesitate?

The fragments of fog flutter, already a red roof is visible. Gigantic signs shine up there on the fog fortresses. Window-glass sparkles. The light suffuses the houses, red faces appear in the doorways. Suddenly the sun breaks through the mist. And the gay-colored flags again float in the morning breeze.

The city emerged, steaming and glistening from the fog. Dew lay on the streets, dripped from the trees; the wet roofs shone. The goggles of the streetcar drivers were covered

with moisture; dew hung upon their mustaches. The print of passing feet was to be seen on the pavements.

Ackermann wandered slowly through the streets, now here, now there, quite at random—no longer his impatient, stormy gait. Why should he hurry? He had reached the goal.

This evening he would not return to his room—God alone knew what was going to happen to him . . .

Contentedly he inhaled the fresh morning air, like steam the breath issued from his mouth. Dew hung on his eye-lashes. Of late he had neglected his personal appearance, but to-day he was shaven and his long hair was clipped.

Weak was the pulse of the dying city. No longer did it awake with the roaring and thundering of peace times. Women, children and old men stood behind the shop counters, drove the wagons, dragged the carts. In front of the shops stood, as they did every morning, lines of women with jugs and market baskets. Now and again motor lorries rolled by, heavily laden, rumbling.

Soon Ackermann was lost again in his own thoughts. Yes, one day it would be like that! They, the pure, the believing, the hopeful ones, would form a community, like the apostles who carried the Gospel to all lands. It would be exactly as it was then.

The apostles would go into the schools and preach: "The dignity of man is the highest law! Sacred and inviolable is human life! All men are brothers, and Reason is the Fatherland of all men." Lies would be banished from the textbooks, attention would be called to the virtues of our neighbors and not to their shortcomings.

This and a hundred other things they would teach, would implant in the souls of the young, the chaste and unspoiled. They would begin with them. The old generation would vanish, loaded with curses, strangled by sorrow and shame.

Into the churches they would go, the apostles, and preach the old, but ever-new, doctrines to the believers—into the factories, barracks, prisons, villages—they would be every-

where. There would be no boundary lines for them, they would pass hither and thither, at will. They would speak all tongues, their work would begin to-morrow in every land, on every continent. They would be poor, despised, these apostles glowing with love, as poor as beggar monks, despised and persecuted.

They would prepare the way for the kingdom that was to come! This kingdom would be populated by happy, kind-hearted people, without distrust, without envy, without arrogance. From now on no man would be the oppressor of another, no nation the oppressor of another nation, the age of slavery would pass for all time.

Freedom, friendship, happiness, will be the greeting of this new race of men.

And the earth will be a garden! All the forces to-day subservient to arms and war will hereafter serve only peace and human welfare. The deserts will blossom, even the sandy wastes will bring forth fruit. Yes, the earth a garden.

Howitzers, bombing planes, ironclads, submarines, where are they now? They will be like specters, apparitions from a dark, incomprehensible age.

Kingdom of the future, kingdom of happiness, kingdom of mankind, I see thy radiance, the radiance of thy peace and thy happiness, I see it shining—I enter into thy domain . . .

Then Ackermann stopped suddenly. A voice from within admonished him. Frightened, he awoke from his dreams, ready to harken to the voice pressing upon him from within.

The tramping of many feet was heard. He turned his head. Around the corner came a troop of men in worn-out partly ragged civilian clothing, led by a non-commissioned officer. There were not many of them, perhaps a hundred. They carried paper boxes, and were reserves for the barracks. No, not the kingdom of the coming race, not a vestige of it, no radiance, only the wretched despairing present.



Dumbly the men trotted by, listless, bent under their fate, ready to die if it was demanded of them, ready to kill, if that was required, ready for anything. Old men with iron-gray hair, a few flat-footed, thick-bellied; a few spindle-legged, spectacled; shopkeepers and students; impudent looking fellows with the physiognomy of thieves, a dwarf wearing boots too large for him, a sick man with his nose partially eaten away, a humpback, an emaciated man with one eye. And a pale-faced man, quite pale, who shamefacedly bent his gaze upon the ground. The boots scraped along, resounded, the knees moved automatically, the paper boxes swung to and fro.

The ragged women who were cleaning the streets laughed, screamed.

"You'll turn the trick! Hurry along!"

One of the women sprang up on the heap of rubbish and executed a broom dance until her filthy skirts whirled.

"Ha—ha! Here comes the Guard!"

"Ho—ho!"

Unsympathetic looks, grimaces, laughter. The mustered-in men were stopped by the passing of a row of streetcars. The crowd collected, vehicles were blocked.

As quick as lightning, Ackermann stepped forward. His glowing eyes took in the crowd, the vehicles, the procession of wretched creatures carrying paper boxes.

Now? Now?

Just suppose—now!

You throw your hands in the air, scream to this crowd that has gathered here, shout the truth to these poor cripples and sick men carrying paper boxes, loud, across the square, so loud that hundreds would hear it, thousands, tens of thousands, would know it by evening . . . !

He grew pale. His throat was contracted by fear, he could not have articulated a syllable. He tottered—even at the mere thought. Now they would fall upon him, the non-commissioned officer, very probably even the men with the

paper boxes, the policeman there, he would hurry up and fell him to the ground.

A pair of large eyes, belonging to an old woman with lemon-colored skin, stared at him from one of the streetcars.

In his excitement he had made an involuntary movement with his arms and this movement had attracted the attention of the old woman.

The bells rang and the streetcars rolled on. Again the knees of the men with the paper boxes were set in motion. The snarl of humanity began to untangle itself, to disappear. The vehicles moved on. The policeman was lost in contemplation of a painted lady who had smiled at him.

Ackermann stood alone on the pavement, suddenly weary, a slight tremor running through every limb. Gradually the color returned to his face. Slowly he resumed his walk, the pupils of his eyes dilated.

Here? How insane that would have been! Futile, without any response. It must take place in a crowd, hundreds of people listening, in whose ears his cry would reëcho until their hearts trembled: who would carry his cry through Berlin into every house; his cry must resound over the whole city.

No, not for a moment had he thought seriously of doing it. But how was it possible that the thought alone was able to frighten him so terribly that his heart stood still?

Near one of the pumps where the cab-drivers came to water their horses stood a bench. Upon this Ackermann seated himself. He stretched out his legs, still feeling weak from fright. The sun shone in his face, dazzling him. He was white, transparent, and traces of freckles were discernible in the strong light.

He was thoroughly frightened.

Horror-stricken!

Was he that? After everything . . . ?

With dilated eyes he watched the gray-haired horse's muzzle submerge itself greedily in the water.

What sense was there in his throwing himself before a madly rolling machine and letting himself be torn to pieces by it? And why just he? Possibly the inner voice was only making a fool of him in leading him up to this point, in order that he might recognize his own weakness and impotency.

Possibly?

Possibly! Perhaps!

He sat paralyzed. The old horse showed his long, yellow teeth.

## 7.

Softly Ruth locked the door of her room behind her. She was desperately restless.

Again she had felt papa's sharp observant gaze fastened upon her as it had been for days. Yesterday she caught a glimpse of it in the mirror, his eyes wide open, bright, lurking, threatening.

Had he grown suspicious, papa?

Possibly the tip of a cigar which she found recently in her room had something to do with it?

Suddenly she flushed deeply. And the letter? In one of her books lay a letter from Karl! Quickly, where was it? Perhaps it was gone? Possibly papa had found it, had read it. Had he not come quite suddenly into her room when Dora was having tea with her? She had not attached the slightest significance to this incident, indeed, not given it a thought. Ah, she hated papa! You never knew what he was thinking about. His eyes always searched, reproached, his gaze was discouraging, his gaze stifled every innocent joy.

No, of course she didn't hate papa, he undoubtedly had his good qualities, he was a man of character, one of a thousand, faithful to his duties, proud, reserved, honorable from head to foot, no, no, she didn't wish to say anything about him. He was embittered, perhaps unhappy, carried

his burdens without complaint. Never had she heard a word of complaint from his lips. He kept silent. But how gladly would she have confided in him, as she would to a tried and trusted friend. Yes, that was the way it should be! But it was just the opposite: Instead of being able to confide in him she was obliged to conceal everything from him. It was naturally his attitude towards mamma that had set her against him. Never could she forgive him for having kept up the law suit against her for years with such bitterness. But she was now more mature, she understood more of life, and knew that there were many unhappy marriages, and that despite this both parties could be honorable, kind persons. It was not that, it was—something indefinable. His proximity oppressed her, transformed her, life seemed suddenly to be so difficult and serious.

She found it really reprehensible that he had come into her room that way. And the tip of the cigar? Papa smoked his cigars in a paper-holder with a goose-quill. She had thrown it out of the window without thinking anything about it. Possibly it had been left there by one of the servants?

At last—Karl's letter. Thank God! She breathed more freely.

It was just where she left it, between the pages of the same book, undisturbed. She re-read the letter and pressed it to her lips.

Yes, Karl was one of the coming race, not one of the vanishing. He had initiative and purpose. And what he was striving for was good. All the world loved him, his friends adored him, he hadn't a single enemy. She, who often wavered, clung fast to him, he steadied her. She would be happy with him.

But why had papa grown so attentive of late?—so tender? Why did he say to her so often that she was pale and nervous and would better go out to Babenberg? Once, indeed, he put his arm about her waist—he had not done that for

years, oh, she remembered quite distinctly how terribly disagreeable these caresses were for her. At that time she lived wholly in the memory of her mother. He asked if there was anything she wished, whether she wouldn't like to take a trip, possibly to Switzerland? He had a certain sum of money laid by for the purpose. No, she needed nothing, nothing at all, and she had no wishes.

Ah, how despicable she was! If papa paid no attention to her she called him cold and heartless—if he attempted to be nice, she immediately became suspicious.

Yes, quite impossible to explain his sharp observant look. During the past few weeks he had breathed hate, he had breathed love.

Yes, at times he hated Ruth with a terrifying fathomless hatred which was inexplicable and which he deplored. Her mother, her mother over again! The same hysterical eyes, filled with secrets, into which no one was permitted to penetrate, living, as she had, in a strange, inscrutable world. How hastily she followed her impulses without any deliberation. How could it be otherwise? When one remembered, a lady who permitted herself to be carried away by a young officer whom she had only known for a few days, who could so far forget herself—unquestionably a horrid and unworthy thought, but nevertheless . . .

It was in the Sommerstorff blood, and inexplicable was the enigma of this little drop of blood.

Relations with a young man with fanatical tendencies—educated, it must be confessed, but at all events without family connections or social position; poor. . . . However innocent these relations might be, as he had been assured—however innocent . . .

His emotions became incoherent, lost themselves in a hazy, confused threatening darkness—and then he hated Ruth.

Repentance, repentance. He was no monster. Already he regretted his violence.

She was young, she thought for herself, and after all that was commendable; she lived her own life, was not one of those silly superficial creatures, who thought only of dress and pleasure. It would naturally be exaggerated, foolish and unjust in the highest degree, to call her hysterical. An hospital acquaintance—somewhat romantic, but why judge it so harshly?

Then he suddenly loved her again, and began to deliberate upon how he could win her confidence. Unfortunately, unfortunately his duties had left him too little leisure to occupy himself with his children. This was the punishment. A little confidence and everything would have been as it should be to-day! This evening he would speak to her again about the trip to Switzerland. It would be an easy matter to secure a pass. . . .

No, impossible to explain papa's sharp observant look! Ruth was lost in contemplation of her mother's picture hanging on the wall; assuredly she, also, had never been able to explain this look, no! Just then some one knocked and announced Fräulein Westphal.

Ruth threw back her head and said: "I'm sorry!"

And despite the fact that she was the image of her mother, as the General thought when he hated her, despite the fact that there was not a trace of the Hecht-Babenberg features to be discerned in Ruth's face—at this moment the same voice, the same somewhat arrogant movement of the chin. In spite of everything, everything.

But the door had already opened to admit a thickly veiled, unfamiliar lady, a delicate, dainty little person.

"I beg a thousand pardons," whispered this thickly veiled lady.

How was such a thing possible? Ruth had said quite distinctly that she was not at home. "You wish?" she said coolly, repellently, heartlessly, without the slightest display of sympathy.

But the thickly veiled lady stretched out her thin arms. "You also. Not you also!" and fell upon her knees.

Ruth, however, soon regained her poise.

"For Heaven's sake!" she cried, and helped the weeping, twitching little creature to her feet. She hadn't an idea who she was. "What are you doing? For Heaven's sake! I'm very nervous to-day, but who are you anyway?" Then Ruth raised the unknown lady's veil, saw a pale, tear-stained childish face with large helpless eyes—unfamiliar to her—and forthwith kissed it. "My dear—my little dear—but now do tell me, what's the matter?"

Then it suddenly dawned upon her who her visitor was; she recalled everything.

And Heinz? She had heard about his death. A dear, unspoiled boy.

"Baron von Meerheim—they were patrolling the sectors—he saw the machine waver and thought, 'Now what is that?'—and then the machine plunged—"

Ruth took Clara into her arms.

"You must stay here with me! Tell me everything, everything! We are friends! Give me your hand!" And Ruth raised the thin little hand to her lips. "Yes, friends! I also have my troubles! To-day I'm frightfully restless. I can no longer endure this city, and I'm going to the country soon. Would you like to come with me? Yes, I can't tell you how nervous I am to-day. That was the reason I was so rude just at first. Do forgive me! And now talk, tell me everything!"

## 8.

Berlin—who doesn't know it?—is the ugliest big city in the world. Paris, London, Rome, New York, Kyoto, Moscow, were gradually built by their own inhabitants; Berlin was hastily constructed by contractors. With the exception of a few, very few, buildings, single streets and squares,

it is a city wholly lacking in architectural charm, fascination—an endless heap of stone and mortar, nothing else. Despite this it possesses, for instance, more bath-tubs than Paris, and before the war had the reputation of being the cleanest capital in the world, a fact not to be underestimated. In short, the ugliest of the world's great cocottes, but always meticulously clean and that is something! Unquestionably the repertoires of the theaters are the best in the world, the best concerts—but otherwise ugly, prosaic, a granite ocean. Formerly this ugliness was lost sight of in the crowds of people, in the thundering of the traffic, in the gleam and glitter of a hundred thousand lights, but to-day? The greatest of all cocottes lay there exposed to every eye—naked and dirty.

Unter den Linden is considered Berlin's most beautiful street. It begins at the Brandenburg Gate and ends at the Palace. A disappointment for every one. But from a strategic standpoint it is unequalled. The palace is built upon a peninsula, making its defense from the river front a bagatelle, while the Linden itself is as straight as a die, broad and straight—a salvo of cartridges and all obstacles are removed.

Fighting went on here in 1848. Barricades—but, as has been said, a few rounds of cartridges were sufficient. No, the Linden is not one of the chief sights of Berlin, it is nothing but a cleverly concealed fortress wall, planted with linden trees, provided with a bridle path, colonized with hotels and cafés—nothing whatever to make one feel at home. Let a single gun be drawn up in front of the palace and every guest in one of the hotels and cafés would be obliged to take refuge indoors.

Such streets are to be found in every city where kings live or have lived; one need only investigate the matter. Kings love wide perspectives.

In the chilly defiles of this endless stony ugliness, the people move hither and thither, bent upon business or



pleasure. Among them are to be found the lurking eyes of criminals and thieves, the smiles of painted ladies, the sparkling eye of a madman or a poet. As in other big cities the policemen stand giving the signal, determining the ebb and flow of the traffic. But to-day, these powerful personages were yawning from ennui and were moved by but one thought, that of not collapsing upon the asphalt from sheer exhaustion.

Ackermann had been wandering about in this endless sea of streets since early morning. He crossed the windy Alexanderplatz, the dusty Spittelmarkt, and strolled up the endless canyon of the Leipzigerstrasse, a street which owed its size to the initiative of the burghers. He sought out only thickly congested parts of the city. Even this street, through which flowed the weak traffic of a dying city—formerly as highly polished as a billiard ball by the pneumatic tires passing over it night and day—even this street was strewn with rubbish. The houses, dirty and neglected, the signs hanging crooked on the shops, the electric trams looking like battered and warped tanks that had been through the war. Although it was just beginning to get warm, an evil odor streamed out from the city. What kind of an odor was it any way? Lucky for you if you don't recognize it—it was the odor of decomposition. Berlin smelled precisely like the forsaken battle-fields.

Ackermann crossed the Potsdamerplatz and turned into the Koeniggrätzerstrasse where the railway stations lie.

He was in search of people, people, crowds of people, and in this dying city he would be more likely to find them in the vicinity of the railroad stations.

Slowly he made his way along. The sun dazzled his eyes. He had leisurely taken a plateful of soup at a restaurant in the Spittelmarkt, as he was convinced that before the sun sank everything would be finished. He had in fact hesitated as to whether he should not go over to the Doro-

theenstrasse and see Ruth once more. But he decided not to. No, now that he was on the way . . .

There! Hark!

Already?

Drums, near the Anhalter Station. Immediately he walked as if on winged feet. Filled with a sudden excitement, he went forward. Distinct, still somewhat hollow, but distinct.

Unquestionably, drums.

The hollow sound of the drum has a curious effect upon a crowd. It takes them back several thousand years to the times when man still fought with the animals of the jungle, to the negroes on the Congo. Instantaneously the crowds rushed over the square as if hypnotized by the sound of the drums.

Suddenly the drums ceased and the brass instruments set up a barbaric noise.

A crowd of people poured into the square from the converging streets. Guns glittered, rows moving uniformly became visible above the heads of the crowd. Evidently a battalion on its way to the station.

Trembling with excitement and without a moment's hesitation, Ackermann took up his position. A sullen-looking old man was unloading paving stones on the street and he climbed up on a pile of these.

The stream of heads swept on, surrounded by the roar of the brass instruments, which sparkled in the sunlight. Curious crowds pressed forward. They stationed themselves on the layers of paving stones quite close to Ackermann and stood on their tiptoes. Even the sullen old man unloading stones raised his head.

Crowds marched along in front of the band, keeping step to the music. Ragged women, neglected children, prematurely developed girls, starved, pale, the token of death upon their brows—and yet joy beamed from every face!

Ackermann's look grew somber.

Art thou ready?

When the moment comes wilt thou be found ready?

People, my people, my love, my longing!

Wilt thou be ready when the great moment comes? Emaciated from hunger, bled white on the battle-field, worked to death—wilt thou have sufficient strength? Hypnotized by lies, sick with a dull longing—wilt thou? The people of the earth are looking to thee! Thou art despised, spit upon, the crown of thorns has been pressed upon thy brow, thy path leads through tears, leads through hunger and madness—dost thou tremble?

Wilt thou stumble and fall? Waver? Sink back into the ranks of the unworthy? Wilt thou be the elect among the peoples of the earth, chosen to make ready the kingdom, the kingdom of a new race?

Dazzling were the trumpets, shrilly they blared, the red cheeks of the musicians were fairly bursting.

Onward, onward, make haste! My love and my longing fly along in front of thee! The call resounds! Lies, arrogance, delusion—cast them off, cast them off! Submerge thyself in the undefiled fountain. Behold the great spirits of the past! How they sparkle in the firmament of thy thoughts! They are looking to thee!

Onward, onward, make haste! The hour is near! Let thine heart, which always burned up brightly when darkness was deepest, now glow anew. Multiply the treasures of the peoples of the earth!

I see thee resurrected, I see thee flourishing, see thee surrounded by brotherly nations.

The crowd had now advanced quite close.

The musicians broke off abruptly. The baton of the leader swept its zigzag course through the air, and again the whirling of the drums was heard.

Rows of helmets, rows of guns, moved along, driven forward by an inexplicable force, held together by an inexplicable will-power. Haehnlein's battalion—the unlucky man . . .

Young men, rosy-cheeked, with unsuspecting, childish faces, who did not dream that death would be near at hand on the morrow! How often had he, Ackermann, seen this march to the station. Old front soldiers, with decorations on their breasts—no, they had no illusions—they marched dully, marched as he had marched formerly: sullenly, dripping sweat, heavily loaded down, trembling under the gaze of the commanding officer. Even though they had hazarded their lives a hundred times before in the trenches, they remained animals in spite of that; here, as was the case in every country at war, the common soldier was an animal, nothing more. A few women marched along with the men, their betrothed, mothers, wives, pale, tottering, weeping. And so they marched along.

But suddenly . . .

Suddenly a voice resounded!

Whence?

No one knew!

A voice—bright, metallic, penetrating—it boomed over the marching battalion, drowned out the drums, the steps of the unsuspecting and experienced—rang across the square and came echoing back from the high houses—the voice of a giant, of a—yes, by God! what a voice it was!

And this voice, piercing, threatening, rang out over buzzing, roaring Berlin—it penetrated to every ear.

This voice cried:

“Long live the comradeship between the peoples of the earth!” Pause, the square resounded, echoes, drums—“Down with the War!”—Silence, piercing screams, drums—“All men are Brothers . . .”

On a heap of paving stones stood a man, a soldier in a wide gray coat fluttering in the breeze; his arms raised wildly, pale as death, with wild, fanatical, burning eyes. His hands twitched—his voice pierced, penetrated. But suddenly this raging piercing voice ceased.

The soldier had disappeared.

He lay on the asphalt, a crowd of people about him. A green plush hat rolled away across the pavement.

A second later this man in the wide gray coat was dragged across the street.

The battalion marched on. The music began again. The majority had seen nothing—but heard—yes, a voice from the air!

This voice dug itself into their hearts, tore them open, so that they bled with misery and longing.

A voice—but what a voice?

They had heard the voice of mankind . . . The rear end of the battalion could see a crowd of people surging along on the pavement.

The plush hat ceased rolling. A consumptive young man seized it, convinced himself by a quick glance that the man in the gray coat was in safe hands, hastily brushed off the hat—yes, and now—his eyeglasses, they were lost. And the consumptive young man hurriedly looked for them.

Then the old man, who, it will be remembered, was unloading paving stones, the sullen old man, raised his head and said:

“Just wait a while—you scoundrels!” And he spat.

The young man instantly became extremely excited, his glance searched the pavement, his gaze, as sharp as a knife, bored into the eyes of the sullen old man.

But the old man raised one of the paving stones and smiled—with what a smile! And the young man quickly retreated and then began to run rapidly, rapidly, without his eyeglasses, to the military automobile around which a big crowd had gathered.

The man in the gray coat had been hustled into this military automobile. His face was bleeding, but he made no resistance. Every movement, the smile on his pallid, finely chiseled lips, said quite distinctly that he intended making no resistance.

And then, for some inexplicable reason, one of the two

mustached men who had dragged him into the car suddenly struck the man in the gray coat with his club. Senseless, wholly senseless, unless it was by way of revenge for the exertion it had cost him.

"Stop, stop!" cried the consumptive young man with the green plush hat, who just then came hurrying up.

But it was too late.

The man in the gray coat—you've seen that I made no movement, offered no resistance?—gave the mustached man a terrific blow in the face, made a few further passes in the air and jumped out of the car.

A gush of blood from the nose of the mustached man robbed him for a moment of action, but his companion quickly drew his revolver and fired. Instantly a child's scream was heard; he had struck a little girl.

But the man in the gray coat had vanished under the archway of a hotel.

First the green plush hat rushed after him, then the mustached man who had fired, and then the other mustached man whose nose was bleeding.

A plump little gentleman, apparently in the best of spirits, was telephoning from a booth in the hotel lounge, sitting there with his stout little legs comfortably crossed: "Listen, my child—now not later than eight o'clock. And don't forget, sweet little girlie!"

Just at this moment he received a blow in the chest and a young man unceremoniously tore the receiver out of his hands: "Military police!"

A crowd had assembled in front of the hotel. An arrest! And a little girl walking harmlessly along the street had been shot in the leg. Nothing serious, only a flesh wound, but all the same, just think—you walk across the square and run the risk of being shot. Quite as if you were at the front.

But now there was a new sensation. The crowd in front of the hotel suddenly retreated to the street. Every one was staring upward.

Incredible—there, there—but, please, where?

Yes, there, there! Don't you see?

A man!

A man up there on the roof!

Incredible!

Yes, a man really was discernible up there between the chimney pots and ventilators. A man in a wide army coat, a soldier.

The houses in the vicinity of the Anhalter Station are no more nor less attractive and ugly than in other sections of the city, flat roofs, alternating with steeper tiled roofs. The man ran rapidly across a flat roof, but when he came to the steep saddle roof he balanced himself cautiously from chimney to chimney. At times he moved like a tightrope-walker, with his arms extended horizontally. With lightning-like rapidity he climbed from a low roof to a higher one.

Again he balanced himself like a rope-walker—high in the air, in the burning sunlight, with chalky face and hands, the fluttering coat covered with dust. This time he tottered, the people down in the square screamed, but he had already steadied himself by holding onto a cement pillar. Leaning against this support, he got his second wind, looked down at the people in the square, his chalky face streaming with blood, cried something in a ringing voice, unintelligible to those below, then hurried to the next chimney. It could be distinctly seen that he was limping.

Down there on the street he had yielded quietly to his arrest, but after being attacked quite senselessly by the man with the club, he seemed determined to escape if possible.

Now he ran across a flat roof and crawled into a trapdoor.

The onlookers breathed more freely. "He's disappeared!"

But after a few seconds his head reappeared in the trapdoor. He slid down to the gutter and ran along it like a cat, literally. The screams died on every lip, the little shopgirls pressed their hands to their hearts.

It was not long before the cap of a policeman was visible

in the same trapdoor, greeted by the laughter of the spectators. The man in the gray coat again climbed up over the fireproof wall and ran across the roof of the corner house.

By this time thousands of spectators had collected. Trains had just arrived and the travelers stood gaping and blinking in the square. That's Berlin, you see! The moment you arrive there's something to look at. Out there in the provinces they had read that deserters frequently escaped from the transports when they reached Berlin; it had even happened that passersby had been shot during one of these incidents. Break your neck, you villain! Yes, that was Berlin, at least there would be something to tell when one got back home. There, he had escaped falling only by a hair.

Red faces stretched out of the streetcars, from every window of the surrounding houses. The cabmen twisted their necks, waiters, barbers, shopgirls, streamed out of the shops and doorways. The houses shone like copper in the sunshine.

Policemen, soldiers.

Soon the traffic halted. It was with difficulty that the street cars could work their way through the crowd.

Droves of children gathered, pointed up to the roofs and screamed as if they were crazy: "There he runs—there!" The entire neighborhood was on its legs.

The blaring march of the regimental band could be heard, playing on the platform at the station. To this was now added the shrill bell of the fire brigade—the hose cart.

Hedi's car had been stopped in the midst of the crowd and could only proceed a few inches at a time; her chauffeur tooted incessantly trying to open a path for his machine.

The chauffeur permitted himself the familiarity of calling her attention to the cause of this excitement by a movement of the head. She looked up and saw, to her horror—in a cloud of vapor formed by the rust-brown dust—a man dusty and white as chalk running along over the ridge of the roofs.

Hedi was just on her way home from a shopping expedi-



tion; curtains, stuffs, antiques, it was very difficult to find just what she wanted. She chased around from one shop to another. Her car was heaped with parcels, and on the chauffeur's seat a silver mirror gleamed out of its paper wrapping—Spanish baroque, somewhat injured, but, to her mind, fascinating, a dream!

Hedi's heart thumped. This was the same cross street where once in summer she had given Otto a farewell supper.

"Drive on!"

Just at this moment a woman newspaper vendor pressed close to the car her face dripping with sweat, a pack of still wet papers under her arm and screamed into Hedi's ear with a shrill voice:

"The Marne crossed again!"

"The Marne crossed again!"

Hundreds of greedy hands were stretched out. She turned round in a circle, wiping the sweat from her eyes with her sleeve.

"The Marne—just a moment, young lady—crossed again!" Her shrill voice drowned out the march the band was playing at the station.

The car jerked its way forward. Hedi just had time to snatch the paper.

She cast another hasty glance at the roof—and just at that moment she saw the man on the roof suddenly stagger—had a shot been fired?—stagger—beat the air with his hands and plunge down from the roof. The gutters offered a momentary impediment to the body and then it fell . . . Hedi covered her eyes with her hand.

The newspaper woman tore along to the station, crying in her shrill voice:

"The Marne crossed again! The Marne—"

## 9.

Day before yesterday and yesterday she didn't come—but now, now she was coming up the Ackerstrasse.

At times she stopped, as if she were undecided, looked around, but nevertheless came nearer and nearer.

Herr Herbst climbed the steps until he reached the door. He no longer lived here; he had abandoned his quarters in this house of evil omen. He now occupied a little room in the "Lion of Antwerp." A tiny little hole of a place, but he preferred it to this room.

He could hear her footsteps, the light panting of her breath. She had a walk quite different from that of the other women who were accustomed to go up and down these stairs. The soles of her shoes were thinner, she trod softly and never touched the railing.

Herr Herbst stepped forward, bent over the railing. She saw him, stopped, slightly panting from the climb.

Herr Herbst raised his stiff hat: "You're probably looking for Herr Ackermann?"

"Yes!" she whispered.

"He was arrested—arrested yesterday—"

Now she suddenly took hold of the dusty railing and the blood receded from her cheeks. Quite slowly. At first she grew pallid, then white as chalk. Then her eyes lost their color; they also grew white.

Heavy fighting—extraordinarily heavy fighting!

Flesh of his flesh, blood of his blood . . .

Herr Herbst bent over the railing and looked her straight in the eyes. She grew whiter and whiter—her hand grasped the railing more tightly.

And soon, she would also be—the lean, consumptive young man had confided it to him. And this disgrace for the family . . .

This evening (it was Saturday) he would have something to tell the girls from the munition factories when he met

them at the "Lion of Antwerp." And he would also drink a small bottle. He still had money, thank God, two pocket-books, a small one for current expenses, and a larger one containing blue bills, still quite a number of them. This evening nothing would be too good for him.

In the meantime he held his hat in his hand and his gaze was fixed upon these eyes from which the color had vanished—this look.

"Here?" scarcely breathed the trembling voice.

"Down town. Near the Anhalter Station."

"Did you see it?"

"An acquaintance told me about it."

"Is that so?—Thank you!"

She turned to go, started downstairs, step by step, softly and noiselessly.

He bent far over the railing and saw her little brown hat disappear around the curve of the staircase.

Suddenly he ran after her with the movement of a jumping-jack.

"Listen, there's something else!"

She turned her chalky white face towards him.

Herr Herbst bent still farther over the railing. And now he plunged the knife into her heart!

"He's dead!" he whispered, quite softly, but so distinctly.

The chalky white face vanished—and suddenly a loud, hard step could be heard running quickly down the steps, quickly taking the curves in the stairway.

But this was too much for Herr Herbst. He couldn't bear to hear this clicking of her heels as she raced down the stairs. In a trice tears began to pour from his eyes.

What was happening? He didn't wish to . . .

Quickly, as quickly as his trembling legs would permit—he always had the sensation of plunging into an abyss when he went downstairs—he followed the hard, rapid steps, racing round the curves.

"Stop, stop—do you hear—"

"Listen—it was an unfortunate accident—"

"Listen—a second—flee from Berlin—they're after you also!"

But he was unable to overtake her.

He ran like a jumping-jack.

"I warn you—don't wish to do you any harm—"

In vain.

The door slammed and, when he had opened it, she was already at least six houses away. Incredible, incomprehensible.

No possibility, not the slightest possibility.

## BOOK III

### 1.

**F**IRE rolling from horizon to horizon.

Dust and fumes—burning men plunge out of the sky, a hailstorm of mutilated bodies sweeps over the earth.

The air resounds with furious peals of thunder, the glowing guns reel with rage, those of heaviest caliber in the distance give a wicked snarl like the growling of wild beasts. The ground totters, the foundations of the atmosphere begin to tremble. This has been going on for weeks, for months.

Hark! Hark! Hark! Scream, so that I can hear you—! What do you say? It's Europe's voice—quite so! It's the voice of greed, of gold—still better . . .

The terrifying cloud sweeps over the battle-field, fed afresh every second by dense, slate-gray and russet-brown smoke; it rolls from horizon to horizon, endlessly. Even the landscape wrinkles its brow, aged, decayed, crushed and careworn.

"Uncomfortable, dear Otto," wrote Captain Falk, called "Steam Roller!" "It's beginning to grow deucedly uncomfortable out here. This morning a thousand shells fell in our sector and they were certainly no weaklings. Corpses everywhere, the living also corpses, the division operator, forty steps underground, also a corpse. He's only able to stammer, severe obstruction in his speech. I'm writing you in order to keep my nerves. What's the matter, you ask? We're lying here in shell holes; no more trenches and barbed wire barricades. The good old days are past—every fifty steps a man, heavy machine guns, light machine guns. Not

a soul to be seen in the hinterland; far and wide, nothing but field kitchens and bandaging stations—not a human being. What does it all mean? . . .”

The slate-gray and russet-brown clouds shimmer incessantly, right up to the black ether. Through the clouds flash the wings of the birds that have been frightened out of their covey—those are the aviators. Fumes hiss up there in the shimmering clouds, fumes shoot darkly through the air, plunge to the ground; a man, all ablaze, hurries across the field, staggers, burns, smolders, chars.

Hark, hark! Yes, scream at the top of your voice, otherwise I'll not hear you! The voice of gold—quite so—mark, franc, pound, dollar, they're all bellowing—it's the millions of Europe clamoring for food, don't forget it—and the dry gunpowder laughs a demoniacal laugh out of the mouth of the cannon.

“The good old days, dear Otto,” wrote Captain Falk in his shell hole, “are gone forever. A thousand pities! Men are shrieking all around, but help is out of the question before nightfall. I'm sitting in the midst of the smoke. My lieutenant is vomiting, swallowed gas, God help him! I can do nothing for him. I'm sweating horribly in my gas mask. We were to have had five hundred bottles of soda-water yesterday, but the entire shipment was blown up en route by a single shell. Our tongues are hanging out. And the dust! Thanks, old fellow, for the brandy! It saved our lives. We had two English prisoners in our shell hole and gave them a swallow of it. Made me swear I'd visit them in England after the war. Hope to be in Berlin within a few days. For weeks we've been expecting to be relieved, but nothing's been done, in spite of the solemn promise. Put the bottle on ice, you'll get a wire from me. Love to Bussi! Hope this letter will get through. It takes two hours to go a kilometer!”

Bussi! Bussi! Who is Bussi? No one knows; apparently some lady, but after all that's immaterial.

The sun sank behind the endless, shimmering cloud of dust

like a face streaming with blood. Night fell quickly. But the guns raged on. The faces of the gunners were bathed in sweat. The surf of blood and iron rolled on terrifyingly into the darkness.

Fireballs of every color were sent into the air, here, there, everywhere. A network of flashes shot like specters across the sky.

Rockets hissed through the air and exploded with little bangs against the sky. Clusters of silvery, violet, light-blue and red Christmas tree balls sank softly through the blue of the night.

"Fireworks!"

The orchestra played. In front of the Casino light-colored gowns and gay-hued wraps melted together in the glittering light of the arc lamps. Out here on the beach it was quite still, semi-twilight, only the moon and the sparkling sea. There was a tang of salt in the mild air. The silver-crested waves glided in noiselessly and spread their gossamer web out over the sands. High and small the moon rode in the heavens, bits of silver danced upon the water.

Suddenly there was a hissing sound, a rocket flew up to the stars. A cluster of flaming sparks appeared against the blue firmament of the night; they outshone the constellations and were carried off by the light breeze, gradually to become extinct.

A silver mask emerged from a beach chair, a hand glistening with jewels appeared. "Superb!"

This was Herr Olsen of Copenhagen, at the moment staying at a German seaside resort, who was admiring the magic of the flying stars. He stretched out his blond head, shook down his white trousers, and appeared in his own person in the moonlight. He was nearly six feet tall and his shadow stretched over and beyond the fortress "Liège," which the children had built in the sand. He was a handsome young man, fresh, childlike and good-natured. With a beaming

countenance and flashing teeth he followed the course of the bright balls in the air.

As far as Herr Olsen was concerned the world was still at peace. He never mentioned the war, never told any stories about the trenches, read no communiqués, and didn't torment himself by making combinations—the most that he did was to study the stock exchange reports and buy German marks when it seemed advantageous to do so.

He didn't care who won the war, nor was his soul in the least disturbed as to the purposes for which it was being waged. In fact, Herr Olsen was—as his companion somewhat flippantly expressed it—"pre-war quality!" His well-made shoes, his six different overcoats, the expression of his face, eyes, speech, smile, thoughts, all "peace-time quality," even down to the color of his skin and the brilliancy of his hair, something German men would never be able to regain. In a word, he was well worth seeing.

His companion, in the shadow of the beach chair, laughed. Her eyes sparkled in the moonshine.

That laugh?

That laugh! Dora?—

Yes, Dora! And now she stretched her silver mask out into the moonlight, and her somewhat plump hand was submerged in the glistening brightness. Her blonde braids shimmered.

She laughed at Olsen's childish joy in the gay-colored Christmas tree balls up there. She breathed more freely in his company; he created quite a different atmosphere from the other men. For instance, Otto, who had just been there for a few days.

Herr Olsen gave his companion a questioning look. Why did she laugh all the time? Even the rays of the moon, which were trying to pierce Dora's eyes, were not able to diminish their deep, rare blue.

Herr Olsen again crawled into the shadow of the beach chair, and vivaciously resumed the interrupted conversation.



The subject of this conversation was as to whether Dora would advise him, Herr Olsen, from Copenhagen, to buy a place in Germany. German money, you know, was so ridiculously cheap. Herr Olsen only discussed his own affairs; the fate of strangers, the fate of the German nation, the fate of Europe, the fate of the planets, mattered nothing to him. Herr Olsen was the center of the universe.

"But if I do, you must promise to come and see me. Ah, it will be terribly dull!"

"If you'll promise to be good!"

"Good? I'll be as good as a little puppy—just as good!" assured Herr Olsen, and again a silvery head peeped out of the beach chair.

Yes, now it was Herr Olsen, who, thank God, had preserved his peace-time soul.

Shafts of fire shot across the horizon and the terrific lightning did not cease for a second. Captain Falk could write quite easily by this light. The balls of fire sparkled like beacon lights suddenly glowing over the waters. In the hill over there where the neighboring regiment was stationed sheafs of red signals were to be seen, and the artillery roared. A crater glowed where a shell had struck.

A ghost crept over the field, crouched, crawled, flitted, ducked. It was Captain Falk. Although immune—or so he thought—he took every possible precaution, for misfortune might still overtake him. He glided along the skirmishing line. Here he shook the sleeping men—but they slumbered on. Again he came upon a group whose eyes sparkled as brightly as stars in the light of the gunfire. Magnificent—these men! Without a drop of water for three days!

The flashes flew specter-like across the sky.

On every road could be heard the rumbling of the wagons. Here, as well as over there. Ammunition, food, wounded, the whole night through. Hundreds of thousands of wagons

rumbled through the darkness. The heavens groaned, the bomb squadrons were at work. Orderlies chased down the road, their caps pulled closely over their shaven skulls, their noses taking the wind. Small and high the moon rides in the skies, flashes glitter, fire flames in the forest.

## 2.

It was chilly in the Tiergarten. It had been intolerably hot during the day, and now it had suddenly grown cool. There must have been a heavy thunderstorm somewhere in the vicinity of Berlin, although only an occasional deep-toned snarl had been heard.

A cab stopped in front of the red brick, ivy-colored villa in the Lessing Allee.

A clapping of hands. "Petersen! Petersen!" A high voice.

The door opened and Petersen, in his zebra-striped jacket, hurried out to the curb.

An officer, wearing a pair of dark glasses and carrying a small traveling bag, stood near the cab.

"Well, Petersen, old boy, I suppose you don't know me?" A high, strange voice.

"Captain?" cried Petersen, astonished and frightened. What was he doing here; what was he after? He had not lived here even before the war.

"What a surprise, Captain!"

"Yes, yes, Petersen—that's the way it is—when you haven't seen any one for a long time. My wife?"

"At the seashore, Captain. Returns to-morrow!"

"Is that so? Well, I'll not disturb you. Only for a few days until I've found some place to live. Everything going all right, old Petersen?"

"Thanks, Captain, quite all right, thank you!"

Petersen took the traveling bag and Captain von Doenhoff stumbled up the steps.

"Ah, how dark! You can probably give me a little bite to eat? Whole day on the train—"

How empty this city, as if deserted! Captain von Doenhoff could fairly smell the silence and desertion. Beyond a doubt, Berlin was dead. Here and there a step, a hesitating, thoughtful, discouraged footstep. Yes, all the steps that passed through the dark streets were discouraged, discouraged and endeavoring to make no noise.

And formerly, formerly!

This house also, his former home—still as death. What fêtes had been celebrated here. He could hear his own former laugh! He had possessed two hundred beautiful women, won seventy races, shot two elephants and a rhinoceros; was one of the first persons in Germany to fly, one of the discoverers of the German heavens—yes, many things had changed since then.

But he immediately recognized the odor of the house. Dora's perfume and a certain sultriness.

"Look alive, Petersen—" He struck against a little table in the garderobe. "Sight somewhat bad, until one gets accustomed to things!" He spoke all the time in a high, strange voice, hastily and unsteadily, like a man who was ashamed of something.

Petersen hurried into the kitchen, tapping his forehead as a sign to the other servants.

"It is—so help me God, now what will Madame say? What's he doing here? They're divorced. But go and see for yourself. My God, but there's something peculiar—"

And so Mina, curious as she always was, must go and see for herself.

She found Captain von Doenhoff sitting on a sofa smoking a cigarette. As she entered the room, he turned the dark glasses in her direction, and smiled, while she couldn't make a sound out of sheer fright. Her salutation stuck in her throat. God save her, she never would have recognized him: gray, entirely gray, almost white, yellow, old, at

least twenty years older? And that smile on his faded face, those wrinkles around the mouth—only people smiled that way—only such people—Petersen was right.

My God, how frightened she was! Why did she have to come running in to see for herself?

Captain von Doenhoff yawned. He looked at her through the dark glasses, following every movement. Then he said smilingly: "Now then, Petersen, old boy, do tell me the latest Berlin news!"

Petersen! He thought she was Petersen!

She nearly let a plate fall in her fright.

And the fire rolled on.

The sun emerged from the endless cloud of smoke like a face streaming with blood. Those who fell in the night were already cold. Fragments of horses and men lay about on the road, wrecked vehicles and smashed trees; their green foliage rustled in the morning breeze. With their caps pulled down over their close-shaven skulls, the orderlies came sweeping along in their automobiles, crashing over the rustling green branches that lay across the road.

The heavens were full of shrapnel clouds, swarms of fliers buzzed about in the early dawn. The guns stamped, knocked, cracked—the mad earth shot up the rising ball of the sun from her craters.

Burning men plunged down from the skies as they had yesterday and day before yesterday and every day. A hailstorm of mutilated limbs swept over the ground. Millions of hearts were convulsed in death's anguish.

And the clouds, the russet-brown, slate-gray clouds hung low over the battle-field.

### 3.

Not far from the Hofjaeger Allee in the Tiergarten runs a narrow winding bridle path through the heavy underbrush.

The General walked up and down in this narrow path, his hands behind his back, his eyes fastened upon his own footsteps, those of yesterday and day before yesterday, still to be seen though it had rained in the night. No one else ever walked here and equestrians—the race of horsemen had completely died out in Berlin.

Dora—?

It was frightfully sultry even at nine o'clock in the morning, and the General had unfastened his collar slightly, as there was no one to see him here. Bushes and trees stood motionless, and now and again the song of a bird could be heard somewhere in the distance. At least so it seemed to him, but it was possible that he was deceived. Was it not peculiar that of late all noises and sounds seemed to be very remote, human voices also, even of persons who were standing quite near him when they spoke?

Really nothing significant about that . . .

The General stopped and fixed his eyes upon the dusty black earth of the bridle path. It was difficult for him to follow out any one train of thought.

No, certainly it was not that. It would be unreasonable to draw any conclusions from that.

In passing Otto's room day before yesterday he had casually looked in. The room was being given a thorough cleaning, and everything was turned upside down; and there he saw—no, at first he paid no attention to it, but walked on and then turned and came back for a second look. Something had struck his eye. Yes, that was it! Lying on a chair was a remarkable costume; a sort of caftan or kimono of a peculiar disagreeable, dirty yellow, and an orange-red turban wound with thick green cord. This costume—he instantly recalled it; that mask, the unknown mask of Dora's ball, the mute one, who walked around rattling a little begging bowl! It was whispered about that a certain royal personage was concealing his identity under this strange mask.

And so it was he—Otto?

Only a masquerading joke, naturally, nothing else. At the time Otto was in the hospital; apparently escaped for that one night; couldn't very well make himself known. That was the reason for all the secrecy, and he had no doubt intentionally spread the report of the royal personage.

Of course, no significance whatever. How had he happened to think of it again?

How wonderfully restful it was here, only once in a while the distant jangling of a streetcar bell. The green of the high treetops was soothing and restful, and out there the sun was burning hot, like a sharp fire. But here, a grateful shade, even a little chilly, and his step noiseless. It was agreeable to walk on the soft moist earth, it was a relief to the feet.

The General walked somewhat bent. He had grown thinner in the face, his cheeks were flabby, his skin was more pallid, drier, with chalky spots. His right eyelid twitched, and a nerve jumped, rather annoyingly at times, close to his right eye.

He had spent the entire summer in this sticky, hot Berlin. He had intended taking a vacation in August, going out to Babenberg, but now so many things had happened to keep him here. Certain difficulties at the front, which would soon be adjusted. But at all events it was wholly impossible for him to leave his post just now, even for a few days, however much he felt the need of a little vacation. Meetings, conferences, and all that,—but—then, those out there hadn't any vacation either.

Well, one must make the best of it.

This half hour every morning—a full half hour, yes, it had to be unless he wished to break down completely—this half hour every morning from half-past eight to nine was his vacation. At nine o'clock he was chained to the machine and hardly came to himself until midnight. He could only sleep by the aid of strong sleeping potions.

It was only during these thirty minutes every morning that

he could think things over quietly, could occupy his thoughts with his own personal affairs.

Thank God he had had sense enough to rid himself of these vexatious money matters. It was not an easy decision, but he congratulated himself on having taken it. He had sold his smaller estate to a Dane by the name of Olsen from Copenhagen—yes, they were already coming, the neutrals who had grown rich during the war, to buy up German property. He didn't regret the step. What's done is done—do what is necessary to be done quickly, without too much deliberation. Otto would have Babenberg, enough and more than enough for him, and Ruth—well, provision would also be made for Ruth.

He turned about; he never went farther than to a certain bright spot of sun in the middle of the bridle path. He stopped and looked abstractedly into the bushes—here also dust on the leaves, even here.

Rothwasser? How did that come into his mind? Oh, yes, it was through the sale of this piece of property that he had been able to rid himself of the tormenting financial worries—how difficult it really was becoming for him to concentrate his thoughts on one subject! Five strenuous conferences alone for this one forenoon. Already his thoughts were busy.

Dora—?

Just then a warning signal came from the Hofjäger Allee, three long-drawn out signals from the automobile horn.

Schwerdtfeger—that ass! Why must he be interrupted just at this moment?

Angrily the General resumed his promenade. He walked somewhat faster; let him wait! Yes, the weeks in which she had been at the seashore had been a sort of test for him. And he had not stood the test, to be perfectly honest! Yes, that was it—not stood the test. He had missed her, felt orphaned and forsaken, no one in Berlin, the house empty, and Ruth in the country—the voices seemed more and more

remote, grew unreal; Dora's voice alone sounded near to him.

It also seemed to him as if people grew more and more indistinct, they spoke unintelligible words, made unintelligible gestures. He scarcely took any notice of them, they didn't interest him any longer, his fellow-men, no, let them do whatever they pleased. And five conferences—they were already seated waiting for him, Weisbach glancing at the clock.

Yes, it was the truth, there's no use in denying it, he felt lonely without her.

Lonely?

What a frightful word, looked at in the proper light! Never in his whole life had he grasped the significance of this word. It was due to the fatigue, the nervous strain, naturally. In her society he felt himself instantly quieted, steadied. Something of her care-free nature and philosophy of life seemed to stream into his veins.

How happy she had been about the little watch which he gave her the first evening! A child, truly, nothing but a big child, always gay and cheerful, a fountain of rejuvenation, as it were. Possibly the vivifying effect she exerted upon her entire environment was due to her rare naïveté and her often ridiculous ignorance of life? Who knows?

It was necessary to consider the matter well, at all events—a decisive step!

A step that needed to be well considered, although he had had it in mind for years. Well considered. Otto? After all, Otto's opinion was immaterial to him, Otto never asked him for his advice, for weeks he never even saw him. His son had become virtually a stranger to him. And Ruth? Well Ruth would accept the situation. She sooner than any one else. He was just beginning to realize how reasonable Ruth was. Yes, it was possible, quite possible, that he had made a wrong estimate of Ruth's character. She had come back from Babenberg in a much more quiet and equable frame of mind. Her sentimental mood seemed to have gone



less deeply than he feared, although this youthful fanatic was now sitting behind bars, and it was scarcely possible that he would escape punishment. Apparently Ruth had utilized her stay in the country for contemplation and reconsideration. The quick stroke of the knife had again proved to be the best way of healing the sickness.

Assuredly, Ruth would make the best of the matter—possibly she was the one who understood him best.

But she herself—Dora?

That didn't mean that he doubted!

Naturally not; he could conclude from various things Dora had said—it goes without saying that it would mean a brilliant social position for her, and, well, many other things. She belonged to a good family, one of her brothers was even a Major, but after all from an insignificant family of country gentry. And not the least consideration would be the relief thereby granted her from her present state of financial uncertainty.

No, not that.

But several things had happened recently to puzzle him—was puzzle the right word?—well, then, let us say calmly, to puzzle him . . .

Various insignificant things, bagatelles so to speak, but it was possible that he did her a bitter injustice? What? Not impossible . . .

Again the horn gave its warning.

Angrily the General hooked his collar.

"It's quite impossible to collect one's thoughts even for five minutes at a time!" he said aloud and returned to the waiting car.

The gray limousine swept away into hot, dusty Berlin: committee meetings, conferences, reports. Already the anteroom would be crowded and Weisbach glancing every second at the clock.

## 4.

No, of a truth, the General didn't know his own daughter. Had he been a close observer he would have seen at the first glance that Ruth had undergone a conspicuous change during the course of the summer. But he was no observer: committee meetings, conferences, strategic considerations—how should he be an observer?

Yes, conspicuously changed!

No longer the timid shy Ruth. Her eyes were flaming and dauntless, her gaze no longer wavering. Questioningly and searchingly her eyes rested upon her father as they sat at table, and more frequently than formerly their looks met for a second.

Something was wrong here! No! Something very strange had happened when papa greeted her upon her return—even to-day she trembled with amazement when she thought of it. Papa had blushed! Still more papa had cast down his eyes. But just think of such a thing: *Papa casts down his eyes!*

Why? But why? She knew papa so well. There was some secret he was withholding from her.

Why, papa, do speak and tell me!

But the General was lost in his thoughts and didn't raise his eyes again during the meal.

Ruth had entirely lost her dreamy, distraught character. She spoke somewhat faster than formerly, no longer so uncertainly. She no longer sang, no longer trilled to herself as she once used to do—to break off frightened as soon as she knew some one was listening. The contour of her lips was firmer and clearer. The invisible smile that formerly always hovered over them was gone. She moved about the house as would a stranger who has no intention of remaining long. She smiled at the orderlies ever on the jump, with the "His Excellency" here, and "His Excellency" there; soon she would hear all this no longer. Ah, this papa who thought

himself of such importance, this Otto, this Dora, this whole society, which lived only for the present and believed things must be so—well, soon she would see them no longer. Already things had progressed to such a point that no one dared become involved in a conversation with her because she expressed her opinion so unequivocally.

But for the present, until *then*, she went on with her work in the kitchen. She found the guests there paler and more wretched after these hot sultry summer weeks. They were always tired, they sank exhausted into their seats, they supported their heads with one hand while they ate their dinner. Every moment some friction occurred; their nerves were all on edge. Only the little stenographers still whispered. At times they giggled quite softly then looked about frightened. The kitchen had grown strikingly quiet.

Ruth was absorbed in her work, but every time a new guest entered she glanced quickly at the door. She was apparently expecting some one, looking for some one!

To be precise she was looking for the little old man in the ulster, he who had imparted such terrifying news to her on the staircase. She waited from day to day, she had an infinite deal of patience.

But he didn't come. Apparently he had changed to one of the other kitchens. It was possible that he was also dead. People died quickly at this time. They were simply swallowed up by the earth.

Finally she went to the Ackerstrasse. She even had sufficient courage to enter the house. With what emotions! How she stared at the door! But she shed no tears.

But alas! no one here knew anything of the whereabouts of the ulster. He had moved out, disappeared.

And yet he was possibly the only person who could tell her anything definite about certain things that she must unconditionally know. Clara, who had been with her in Babenberg, had told her of Hedi's experience at the Anhalter Station—that was all that she had been able to learn. His

friends, his younger brother, all were as if swallowed up by the earth, no one to be found; no news. Evidently all of them had been arrested. She alone had been left in peace.

Then suddenly one day as she walked through this neglected evil-smelling part of the city—yes, suddenly she spied him.

There, that must be he! She felt it instantly.

A score of laughing, screaming children—and in their midst a human creature. At this moment she felt herself to be a seer. He! Yes, it was indeed, he.

He was dancing like a jumping-jack and whenever the children came too near he hit at them with his stiff hat.

Suddenly he felt Ruth's eyes fixed upon him. He was close to the railroad bridge that spanned the street.

He stopped—just at that moment he had been about to hit at the children with his hat—and endeavored to collect himself.

"Go away!" cried Ruth. The children crowded to one side. A lady and a drunken man! Tremendously interesting to them. Reared in this adventurous part of the city they were accustomed to the strangest incidents.

"I'd like to ask you something!" began Ruth.

"Gladly—always at your service!" Herr Herbst swung his hat and tottered backwards in his fright. He had recognized Ruth immediately, and although he was drunk he was struck by her changed appearance. Her voice no longer sounded mild and friendly as heretofore—hard, relentless. Yes, and now at last she had come . . .

"No, didn't see it—only heard it!" he stammered, growing pale while his eye wavered. "Shot? Yes, shot! I heard it! Why? I don't know!"

Yes, why had he been shot when you come to think of it? The military policeman fired at Ackermann because had he refused to fire some one would have shot him instead. Nowadays, the mouth of a gun was pointed threateningly at every one—from the highest to the lowest.

"And you can't tell me?"

The group of children stood at a little distance watching the scene curiously. The lady and the drunken old man, who tottered to and fro and would probably receive a stinging box on the cheek ere long—it was enormously interesting.

"You mean?"

"Some one must have denounced him to the police, isn't that so?" Ruth screamed this at him.

What a frightfully unequivocal question!

The ulster staggered. He scratched the gray stubble on his chin, his little pale face twitched. Then he raised his stiff hat high and made a movement as if he were about to begin to dance and suddenly—suddenly his knees gave way under him.

"I, I!" he cried. He groaned and nodded. "Yes, I!"

"You—?"

"Yes, I!—I!" He drew nearer crawling along on his knees, his little bald head sunk low in shame and humiliation. The children laughed.

"Yes, I, God be merciful to me!"

"You—? But why—?"

"Why? Yes, yes, why?"

"What had he done to you? He?"

"Why? Inexplicable—like everything in this world. Like everything—inexplicable—I love you in fact, my lady, as I would my own daughter—"

"Take care!" Now she would certainly give him a box on the ear, thought the children expectantly.

"My own daughter—inexplicable!" sobbed Herr Herbst, and his hat slipped from his hand. "I'm a fallen creature!"

The children shrieked and clapped their hands.

"Stand up, will you!" screamed Ruth. "Stand up, I tell you!" And she screamed so loud that Herr Herbst actually managed to scramble to his feet. "I see perfectly well what you are. A reprobate, quite true, a perfect reprobate—"

"Yes, yes, yes!" Herr Herbst raised his hands appealingly. "But I was not always as I am to-day, my lady. My son fell out there; his mother—"

"But do you know what you've done?" Ruth interrupted him, beside herself. "Do you know, I ask you? Do you know whom you have betrayed? You, Judas Iscariot?"

At this invective Herr Herbst started back as if he had been shot.

"Do you know who it was? It was Jesus Christ, who had descended to earth to redeem mankind! Yes, that's who it was! You didn't know it?"

"Jesus Christ!"

"And you—a drunkard—!"

Boundless fright was mirrored in the little half-blind drunken eyes. He believed what Ruth in her mad rage had said—and even Ruth believed it at the moment in the paroxysm of her grief.

She turned quickly and hurried away. Somewhat abashed, the crowd of ragged children looked after her. They had been struck dumb because the lady who was quarreling with this funny old drunken man, had suddenly begun to weep.

"You've killed him—but he's immortal!" Ruth cried aloud as she walked along and the tears gushed forth and ran down over her pale transfigured face.

Even after she had reached the more congested streets, she kept repeating the same words, loudly and incessantly.

But no one took any special notice of her; by this time every one had grown accustomed to seeing people weeping and talking to themselves.

## 5.

Hark!

The fire rolled.

It tore open the bowels of the earth. Day and night sweat-bathed bodies burrowed in the gloomy coal galleries—the

coal cars clanked unceasingly up and down in all parts of the globe. The blasting furnaces spewed fire over the continents, streams of liquid metal gushed forth in the form of guns and shells.

Brains were martyred. Engineers and chemists no longer took time to sleep. New machines, new explosives, new gases, ever more terrifying. Hundreds of millions of brains were thinking only of destruction, meditated only upon death; the nations of the earth had become nations of murderers.

Day and night the waters of the ocean were churned by the screws of the ships—forward! Day and night the trains rushed along through Europe, forward! The waters trembled and the earth shook. Men, horses, cattle, forests, the treasures of the soil, the wealth of the universe. They all had a common goal.

The cloud!

There, there where men, horses, cattle, forests, the treasures of the soil, the wealth of the universe, were being ground in dust—there . . .

The rivers are already red, islands of corpses float about upon the ocean. France transformed into a desert, Germany into a cemetery, the whole world into a hospital.

Forward, soldiers! It must now be decided—the guns must solve the problem.

The gray limousine tore along through the red-hot streets of Berlin. Conferences, committee meetings. Schwerdtfeger wiped the sweat from his dirty face. He also had been cheated out of his vacation, but after all he was nothing but a chauffeur and could thank God on his knees that he didn't have to drive out there, where the roads gaped before the car, and fire spewed.

The gray limousine tore down the Linden. Tired and exhausted the General glanced at the street with half-open eyes and yawned.

Suddenly a mounted policeman galloped along the bridle

path; the pedestrians stopped as if at a word of command and gaped.

With a jerk the General straightened up.

Incredible! By bright daylight! Unter den Linden!

He would never have supposed such a thing possible.

Several dozen young men and women, perhaps a hundred, not more, were hurrying along the Linden, screaming. A wave of foam sweeping across the Linden, nothing more. Was it not incredible that any one should scream that way on Unter den Linden and attract the attention of the passers-by?

The General moved uneasily on the seat and indignantly looked out of the window. But just at this moment the young boys and girls shook their fists at him. Entirely unnerved, he drew back his head. Yes, what was happening, what was going on here? They screamed some word, always the same word—but he couldn't understand what they said. It couldn't be possible that the word they were shouting was—it was impossible!

But he suddenly grew very serious as he approached the palace. Ah, just look! A cordon of policemen barricaded the street. A half-grown youth made an attempt—in a trice a saber flashed in the air. There he lay.

"Down with them!" cried the General, red and purple in the face. And the Government?

The General laughed a ferocious laugh behind Schwerdtfeger's bent back.

The Government?

They slept.

The gaping crowd on the pavement begins to disperse. The wave has exhausted itself. Nothing has happened.

The gray limousine tears along its way: conferences, consultations. Reserves! Commissary! Ammunition! Horses! Conference after conference . . .

Forward, soldiers!

The battle howled, the guns roared! Fight, die!



The brow of the telephone operator was wrinkled, the commander at the trench periscope grew pale, the attack on the right wing had halted! Forward, artillery; if need be our own artillery will drive you forward; just wait!

Fight, die! The eyes of the whole world are fastened upon you!

The stock exchange was trembling, the stocks falling. You would not do such a thing, you beloved heroes? Yes, heroes! Three marks, three francs, three shillings, three dollars a day, decorations, triumphal arches, artificial limbs—you know what our tariff is, don't you? You would not do—? Potash, coal, colonies.

The stock exchange ticks, day and night; it is already powerfully excited, it breaks off somewhere, it crackles, it ticks; ah, this terrifying excited ticking! Unfortunately you can't hear it for the thunder of the guns, you stock exchanges of Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, New York—already a bankrupt has put a bullet through his head—and you hesitate?

Kaisers and kings dream of a triumphal entry into their capitals, presidents dream of the moment when they can raise their shining silk hats in a turmoil of applause.

Emperresses and queens, with their own hands, the wives of the presidents with their own hands, will fasten the little copper medals to your breasts.

Forward, you well-beloved, you splendid, incomparable heroes!

The old men, who are guiding the destiny of the world, sit behind padded doors and cough into their cold waxen hands. They sit at long polished tables, with cheeks as rosy as those of a child, tap impatiently with their finger nails on the table—the secretaries creep around on tiptoe over the shining parquet floors. The old men scribble with their pens, cast imperious glances.

Every word that they utter, every stroke of the pen, signifies death, every smile, death, death—but they live on.

For months, for years, the clouds of dust have ascended to the skies over the battle-fields, the heavens rain black blood—the apocalyptic horsemen ride on the clouds and pour out the vials of their wrath over Europe. Weighed, weighed in the balance and found wanting! The fiery handwriting of the guns flames up on the darkened firmament.

The cabinet of old men has just been called to a new and solemn conference.

Reserves!

The General's hands tremble. In his excitement he throws the telegram back on the table. A feverish red spreads over his face.

More than two years ago he had submitted a memorandum. Acting upon the suggestion of a woman patriot, he had proposed to enlist two million women in the army for guard duty, service behind the front and in the bureaus. Two millions, ten millions, if you like! Fighting battalions could unquestionably be formed from the strongest of these women. There was splendid material among the women. (The General was accustomed to use the word "material," as were all army men!) The women, without the slightest doubt, would even be willing to face the guns and that with enthusiasm.

His memorandum—it lay somewhere dust-covered with adverse annotations. No attention had been paid to his counsel—just as advice on the whole was seldom observed. There was always some one who knew better, much better.

"This is the second time I've rung!" said the General in a displeased tone to Weisbach.

"The bell only rang once, sir," Weisbach assured him.

The General arose—his eyes seemed to grow larger.

"Now you're beginning to contradict me!"

The adjutant made no reply but stood awaiting orders. His face was pale. The General measured him with a look. "And now you're offended, Weisbach!" he said more mildly.

"That was all that was lacking, for you to commence getting offended!" The adjutant's look beamed forgiveness.

The General walked up and down, his hands trembling. Then he stopped in front of Weisbach and said quietly, "Recall all the officers immediately from their furloughs! We must *redouble* our efforts!" he added, screaming at the top of his voice.

Reserves? As if everything had not its limits. And what sort of a tone was it they used of late? Every man who was not ready to drop in his tracks had been mustered in, the hospitals had been swept clean, men with fever torn from their beds, even taken from the operating tables, no consideration—none whatever!

And reserves?

There were no more reserves, that was the naked truth! The telephone rang!

Just at that moment it grew as black as night outdoors, and a crashing peal of thunder sprang with devilish glee across Berlin's sea of roofs. Thank God; the heat had become intolerable.

## 6.

A cripple walking on crutches swung himself across the Potsdamer Platz. He only touched the ground with the toe of his right foot. A small pallid shadow swung along beneath him.

All the pedestrians, there were only a few, very few, trod under their feet similar pallid shrunken shadows. It was midday. The sky was covered with a thin veil of vapor through which the sun burned. What terrific heat!

The cripple swung himself down the Leipsigerstrasse.

This street was also empty. But few people, empty street-cars. Berlin was like a graveyard visited now and then by little groups of mourners.

"Yes, a veritable graveyard!" said the cripple.

The few people abroad crept along, their eyes fastened upon the ground, shy, uneasy. They stretched out trembling hands for the noon papers, glanced through them and folded them again with a discouraged air.

War, Hunger, Death, Death, Hunger, War. . . .

A few weeks earlier the city had been electrified by hope. The enemy's reserves were exhausted, England was standing on the brink of a precipice. Yes, what else was there to do? The newspapers carried the news, even a Cabinet Minister officially announced it—but now things didn't seem to be in such good shape.

Just as Berlin had rejoiced a few weeks ago, thousands of prisoners, hundreds of guns, so Paris, London and New York were now rejoicing. But Berlin had grown quite still.

A graveyard by day, a graveyard by night. During the night a thundering was frequently heard in the city, a rumbling, and the sleepers started, frightened, from their beds—hark!

The cripple swung himself along on his crutches down the Wilhelmstrasse. Here in front of the government offices it was even more silent. Not a human being. Only a dog was moving along from lamp-post to lamp-post.

The cripple turned into the Linden and approached the gray limousine standing in front of Stifter's. He hobbled curiously around the car. Schwerdtfeger sat in the shade eating his lunch, a piece of bread and cheese, that was all. Like all soldiers he received two marks and thirty pfennigs a day and an additional two marks for food.

Schwerdtfeger sprang up instantly and stood at attention. The cripple was an officer, Schwerdtfeger had seen him once before. Yes, he looked like a college student, with snow-white hair, large feverish eyes, a chalky face that twitched incessantly.

The cripple swung himself into Stifter's.

Here, in the semi-darkness of a niche in this exclusive

restaurant, he saw an earthy face with deep black sockets, and a look that burned without seeing anything.

Stifter's was also quite empty.

"Will you permit me?" asked the cripple.

The earthy face with the eyes withdrawn into their black sockets began to move, apparently deeply frightened, the burning eyes which saw nothing passed searchingly over the face twitching incessantly, over the snow-white hair of this man with the head of a college student.

"I've had the honor—" The twitching face endeavored to smile.

And the General recognized Captain Wunderlich.

"Is it possible? It's so dark here. Please be seated—and please give me the pleasure of being my guest, Captain Wunderlich."

The Captain leaned his crutches against the wall and drew himself up by the aid of the arm of the chair. Never did the General look into Wunderlich's face without secretly envying him.

"And so you're in Berlin."

"Yes—I'm finished!"

"Finished?"

Wunderlich's face twitched. There was a feverish look in his big boyish eyes.

"Kidneys," he added. "Finished! Pity, but can't be helped! Collapsed—"

But, lo and behold, the General's hands trembled, and it seemed as if he were going to have difficulty in speaking; he stammered, stuttered, sought for words. Where had the General's marvelous composure and poise gone to?

"And so you don't like the way your nerves are acting? Here on leave." With a trembling hand the General filled Wunderlich's glass. "Here in Berlin also we're over-worked. And moreover the heat! And the front?"

Whispering.

"Troops of fliers! Fighting in three stages—at a height

of two, three and four thousand meters—for every machine that's shot down ten new ones—night-battles also—

“At night also?”

“And bombing squadrons—at every hour of the night—not a minute's rest in the officers' quarters or camps—no thought of sleep . . .”

“Ahem!”

The waiter served.

Wunderlich made his report with a distorted face. He whispered so that he could not be overheard by any one in the restaurant.

“. . . fifty thousand men alone made prisoners in three days—five hundred heavy guns—”

“I know it, I know!”

“. . . Hospitals without linen, poor devils in their filthy uniforms—paper bandages, buried naked—horse meat—”

“Horse meat?”

“. . . first the tongue, each man a piece, on the point of a knife—in a second nothing left but the skeleton of the horse.”

“Ahem!”

“. . . and the horses fall by the hundreds, thousands. No strength left.”

“And the gases? Gold cross, blue cross?”

“No striking losses among the enemy. We find the batteries abandoned. But there are new ones back of them!”

“And the—morale of the troops?”

“Magnificent, marvelous, as ever. Fight until they drop from sheer exhaustion. Without the proper food, unrelieved for weeks . . .

“Some divisions only staffs left—field kitchens, motor cyclists . . .”

Whispers. The General adjusts his eyeglasses and peeps suspiciously out of the niche. Eavesdroppers everywhere. If the enemy *learned that . . . !*

“A million and a half American troops—”

Suddenly the General looks at his watch and gets up quickly. His hands are icy cold. His gait is unsteady as he goes out of the restaurant.

And the gray limousine tears through the glowing streets; committee meetings, conferences . . .

Shrieks.

Shrieks in the clouds. Accursed be the earth, accursed the earth. Accursed be kings, presidents, ministers. Thrice accursed!

Our lives sacrificed to a lie, sacrificed to madness!

Millions of dead soldiers, fallen, slaughtered, millions and again millions, pass over Europe, clothed in wretched rags, their bodies mutilated. They shriek. They darken the heavens.

Duped, deceived!

A curse upon you!

But the front thunders and the cloud of dust hovers unceasingly over the battle-fields.

The dew is falling, night sinks over the earth. The horizon gleams, fire blazes above the clouds, the guns roar. Ackermann's ghost, of gigantic stature, hovers over the battle field, and his voice resounds louder than the guns.

*"Nations of the earth—sons of mothers—brothers . . ."*

The shells hiss all about him. He stands there in his wide gray coat, his hands raised, his eyes like sparkling stars. Steel, fire, gas? What do they still wish of him? His cry drowns out the screeching shells.

*"Brothers!"*

And the sweat-covered soldiers in the trenches, block houses, battery positions, listen. Whose voice is that?

Ackermann's ghost carries the wounded across the battle-field, seizes by the arm the madman just about to strike a helpless opponent, guides the hand of the surgeon who is binding up the wound of the bleeding enemy. Ackermann's ghost touches the dead lying there with open eyes: Germans, French, Indians, Americans, Englishmen, negroes, Canadians,

Australians, and speaks: "You will arise from the dead on the day of the great reconciliation, all of you—you saints and martyrs!"

The dark cloud which blazed over the battle-field up to the very stars is filled with Ackermann's spirit. Already—already, the noise of the guns is muffled. Already they are silent. . . .

But the old men who sleep lightly start up affrighted in their beds, listen, press the bell-button.

Again the guns commence their terrific uproar.

Men love pomp and power as do little children. The common people are easily duped, but woe unto them who deceive them.

## 7.

No, it simply could not go on this way! One Sunday afternoon the General sent the car away again. This hadn't happened before for months. Completely exhausted he sank on the chaise-longue. He instantly fell asleep, and he slept throughout the entire afternoon and on until evening, gasping and groaning.

When he awoke an impenetrable darkness filled the room. Confused he started up. His head was red-hot, heavy. Perspiration ran down over his face.

Ten o'clock! Was it possible? He had slept seven full hours! An uneasy feeling remained—something heavy, as heavy as lead—what was it anyway? Had he dreamed? The house was as hot as an oven, intolerable. Rapidly he began to get ready to go out.

On the steps his feet suddenly halted. The tips of his boots twitched back as though he had detected some disgusting insect on the steps. Yes, a horrid dream, forsooth a most disagreeable one! The chariot of victory on the top of the Brandenburg Gate had suddenly plunged to the ground, and his car was halted by the débris around which



were standing gaping onlookers. What chaos, and see the horses' legs protruding from the ruins! And curiously enough débris covered almost the entire Pariser Platz, a veritable mountain . . .

The air in the streets was splendidly invigorating—a touch of autumn. It must have rained during the day as the asphalt was still moist. The moon scudded away over the Tiergarten, a flurry of little clouds whirling along with it. A cab, a few pedestrians, profound silence.

The General walked slowly, inhaling the fresh evening air. In a short time he had overcome the uneasiness remaining from the disgusting dream. He felt refreshed from his long sleep, his strained nerves had grown somewhat quieter. He had his thoughts better under control.

He nodded to himself. Everything was now clear before his eyes, uncannily clear, frighteningly clear. It had not even been necessary for this Wunderlich to come and give him this terrifying news. No. He stood still.

"Napoleon had at least the winter as an excuse," he whispered to himself contemptuously.

He walked a few steps further and nodded. "They've let themselves be beaten—absolutely beaten!" Yes, that's the truth of it.

Had he not always sounded a warning?

This entire offensive—sheer madness! Unavoidably heavy losses, a senseless lengthening of the front—not one of the strategic goals achieved, the attack shifted more and more to the south. The breaking through to the ocean, the strangulation of the English army—all a fiasco! And what—the question was assuredly permissible—what was the idea of advancing to the Marne a second time? Signifying nothing but an enormous curve in the front fed by a single weak railroad line? Why? Incomprehensible!

But even if this miscarried offensive *had* succeeded—what then? They had nothing left—nothing more upon which to utilize the success. The others, on the contrary:

America's inexhaustible reservoir of human and material resources scarcely touched—

Yes, beaten, these men made in the divine image!

If a command at the front were offered him to-day—thanks, most respectful thanks . . .

Had he not always advocated withdrawing to the fortified position, to the Maas, to the Rhine if need be, and letting the enemy break its head? They would have been obliged to sacrifice millions! We could have held the positions for years, and left an enormous army of maneuver free for military operations in Italy, Macedonia and Turkey.

But suddenly the General stopped astonished.

Lights? In Dora's house?

Lost in thought his feet had involuntarily turned to the red brick villa in the Lessing Allee.

He was to have spent the evening with Dora, but she had written him yesterday saying she was leaving town.

Rejoiced to know that Dora was at home, he entered. His cares, the thoughts tormenting him, the feeling of loneliness, that had martyred him of late . . .

The house door stood open. No one was in the entrance hall, light was burning.

"Petersen!"

But no one came. Silence.

From the upper story which lay in darkness came a strange sound, like the moaning of a bird repeating the same helpless mournful cry, an imprisoned bird, which feels the presence of death and is able to bring forth only the one plaintive note. A violin . . .

It was Captain von Doenhoff who at present was stopping here until he found suitable quarters. Two hundred beautiful women, two elephants and a rhinoceros, and despite that he wore dark glasses and was learning to play the violin. He practiced from morning to night.

The General hung up his cap and opened the door leading into the tent room.

A light was also burning in the anteroom. The ecstatic saint in his cinnamon-colored mantle swung his book with a fanatic gesture—the General threw back the portière. Light also in the tent, the bluish swinging lamp was lighted. But no one to be seen.

Just then he heard Dora's laugh and a man's voice.

He started. Had she guests? Who was here? It would perhaps be better to go back and look for Petersen. Possibly he was in the garden? Yes, where was he anyway, this Petersen, the door wide open, easy of access to any thief?

Remote, remote sounded the monotonous plaint of the unhappy martyred bird, expressing its grief in the one everlasting tone.

The General was confused. It was difficult for him to make a decision. Finally—had Dora secrets from him? Suddenly he recalled all the little contradictions, the insignificant, quite insignificant incidents, whereby he had been disquieted especially of late. At any rate she was not in the country and yet she had written . . .

Yes, difficult to decide. How many guests could there be?

He smelled the odor of burning faggots. Dora loved to play with fire and burn faggots and pine cones in the hearth.

Silence within. The fire crackled—the light fluttered over the floor and the bird mourned in the distance.

The General turned to go—but just at the moment he had lifted his foot to go and look for Petersen—just at that moment something attracted his attention intensely. In the crack of light between the curtains, near the fat-bellied black cushion that lay on the rug in there—a little raspberry-colored silk boudoir slipper was visible.

This hypnotized the General. This little silk slipper moved as if it were alive—a foot became visible, an ankle—was it clothed in a flesh-colored stocking, or what was that?

Now a hand appeared—a plump, well-cared-for hand, Dora's hand, and with a little curve this little hand tossed a cigarette stump in the direction of the fireplace. Again the little raspberry-colored slipper moved. The hem of a light red transparent garment was visible . . .

"But that is quite impossible!" said Dora aloud, evidently angry. "I beg of you; certain considerations must be observed—!"

"Considerations?" answered a masculine voice laughingly. "It's foolish to take any consideration, Dora!"

This voice! The General grew as pale as death.

Then a dog growled. Butzi, the griffon, had growled.

"Keep still!" commanded Dora.

But Butzi wouldn't keep still. On the contrary, he began to bark furiously and as loudly as ever he could.

The raspberry-colored shoe disappeared.

"Is any one there? Come, Butzi, dearest!"

"Who could be there?"

The General started back. He was paralyzed. But despite that he started back. But it was already too late. Some one stood up, a step approached noiselessly . . .

Yes, it was too late! The noiseless step was now quite near. And a hand drew back the portière.

The General drew back still another step, as far as his paralyzed limbs would permit. He gasped for breath, his uniform seemed to have grown too small for him—suddenly the violin in the distance ceased.

Between the curtains appeared—

Yes, what appeared there?

Something that in the first moment seemed to be a supernatural apparition, glistening as Lucifer drawn up to his full height. Or an Oriental priest, if you will, in a flaming fiery-yellow garment, over which played vivid red dragons. With pale arms and pale bluish face and snow-white eyes. Stretched to his full height. Otto!

Air—the General caught himself. He had recognized the voice immediately. He also straightened up, grew in stature and looked steadfastly into the snow-white eyes.

They were the eyes of his son, but more than that they were the bright eyes of the Hecht-Babenbergs.

For a second these eyes displayed fright, but immediately they grew steady again. They grew larger, and a cold brilliancy issued from their depths.

These eyes spoke, and he understood quite distinctly what they said! They gleamed contemptuously.

"You here?"

"You here? Lo and behold! You're eavesdropping! You're spying! Lo and behold!"

"Very interesting. Shall I announce you to Dora?"

But now the brilliancy became harder, colder, icy.

"Very well! Now you know it! What are you going to do about it?"

"Go! Yes, go!" said these eyes.

And then they suddenly gleamed.

"You know my feeling for you, or—you've known it for a long time—very long! If you like I'll take the consequences—I'm at your service—at any time . . ."

Yes, that was what Otto's eyes said—or was he mistaken?

The portière fell over a naked arm: the apparition had vanished.

"There's no one here!" said Otto in an even tone, behind the curtain, and again Dora commanded Butzi who was still growling to be quiet.

One—two—three seconds had the two Hecht-Babenbergs looked each other squarely in the eye. Not longer than that.

The saint in the red mantle swung his book ecstatically. Across the surface of the clouded mirror glided a face which looked as if it had been carved out of chalk. Some one wearing black horn spectacles on his nose—for a second these black glasses were fastened upon him—or was it a ghost?

## 8.

At the same time Ruth was walking along the Tiergartenstrasse on her way home. Just at the moment she was about to turn into the sadly neglected little garden in front of the house—she already had her hand on the latch—a low voice called her by name.

She stopped. A figure standing in the shadow of the trees across the road gesticulated. As she hesitated, the shadow stepped out into the light a moment and beckoned to her.

Ruth recognized him. Reluctantly she crossed the road. The moon flew along high in the sky, little gossamer clouds dancing around it.

"You? What do you wish of me?"

"For days I've been trying to speak to you. I beg your pardon.

"There was something I forgot to say the other day. Please step into the shadow. I dare not let myself be seen—"

"I don't understand you!"

"There's much that is unintelligible—but I've been warned—a high personage is very vexed with me. They're threatening to have me put into a lunatic asylum if I'm caught about anywhere!"

"I really can't understand you!"

"That's neither here nor there. That's not what I wanted to say to you. Can't we step back a little further—so, thank you—don't be afraid. I'm an old man and I have not drunk anything all day. Intentionally. Not for days. Yes, the last time I was ashamed of myself—but just because I was in that condition, I forgot to say something—something very important!"

"Please—!"

"It was not I alone, that's what I wished to say—"

"Not you alone?"

"No, I was not the only one responsible—"

"I don't understand you!"

"Wait a minute. Some one's coming. Let's move on a few steps. So; that's better!"

Whispering in the dark.

"Not I alone, but some one else at the same time—possibly somewhat earlier, I don't know—but it was not meant for him, but for you!"

Whispering. Suddenly a scream. It was Ruth who screamed.

"Impossible! Impossible! Impossible!"

"I implore you, Miss—let's go—some one's coming—so—just a few steps—"

"Wholly impossible!"

"I swear it! The agent told me!"

Whispering. Again the shadows move forward in the darkness under the trees.

Suddenly Ruth stopped.

"Swear to me—"

"I swear!"

"Swear it—by your son who fell—"

"I swear!"

"By the memory of your wife—swear it—"

"I swear!"

"Listen to me: may you be everlastingly accursed if you are lying—"

"I shall be everlastingly accursed—"

Ruth put her hands before her face and ran into the darkness of the park.

The moon flew across the dark sky through boiling clouds. But finally it ceased to move. It remained hidden in a pitch-black cloud and disappeared completely. The trees of the Tiergarten bowed their tops—a gust of wind blew over them.

The city lay in complete darkness, black and lifeless, like the carcass of a gigantic prickly animal that had died and decomposed in its march across the turnip and potato fields. So it lay for two, three, five, minutes, then it vanished in an

enormous cloud of dust that rose from the street canyons. A whirligig of flashes tried to lay hold upon the city, to grip it and destroy it. Thunder rattled.

Suddenly the belated pedestrians grew frightened and hastened their steps! No, it was not the weather! It was something quite different . . .

A wide, light colored army coat floated through the dark street canyons—in uncanny haste. Shining hands, shining in the light of the flashes, knocked thunderingly on the doors of the houses: *Up, up, you sleepers, the hour has come!* The shining hands touched the shoulders of the hurrying pedestrians, so that they paled: *Hesitate no longer!* A shining face passed the black windowpanes of the dark houses: *The heralds of the new kingdom are already on the way. Make ready!*

And then the whirlwind lifted the floating army coat in the air and the shining hands of the shining face flew with furious rapidity over the roofs of the city.

What was it? What was happening in this city . . . ?

And now the rain poured in torrents.

The policemen fled to shelter, thieves and housebreakers whisked into the doorways—otherwise no one was to be seen abroad.

A glorious rain, cold, clear; ruthlessly it plunged down from the black skies.

Captain von Doenhoff stood under a doorway at one end of the Lessing Allee. He had only got so far when he was overtaken by the storm.

Here he now stood, listening blissfully to the rustling of the rain and the crash of the thunder peals. Yes, quite superb!

There—a cab rattled by.

"Hey, cabby; hundred marks for the trip!"

"Hey, cab! Cab, stop!"

Again no success. The horse hoofs clip-clopped on.



"Hey, cab! Hundred marks!"

Ah, at last his luck turned. The cab stopped.

Captain von Doenhoff with the black glasses on his nose felt his way through the rain. "Where are you anyway? I don't see so very well!"

"Here I am!"

Slowly the cab rocked its way along through the deluge. Doenhoff put his nose out of the window and sniffed the air. Magnificent this air, magnificent this rain, and this crashing of the thunder—nothing short of superb. At last some noise! The streets were as clean as if they had been swept. Only now and then the splashing of horses' hoofs and the rattling of some monster which Doenhoff made out to be a taxi-cab.

This drive out to the Bavarian Quarter was endless but nevertheless a delight. It was the first time he had left his room in the red-brick villa, where not a soul paid the slightest attention to him. Free! Free! He lighted a cigarette, almost burning the tip of his nose, but that didn't matter. This drive seemed to him a journey through dark, rain-soaked Berlin.

Then the cab stopped and Doenhoff crawled out.

"And now, my friend, do me a great favor, as I don't see very well, and ring for the concierge. I want to go up to Fräulein Alexa Alexandra."

Alexa Alexandra? A dancer, that is to say, less of a dancer than a lady. He had known her well at one time; in a way he had discovered her, created her. Petersen had looked up her present address for him in the telephone book.

The cab driver lit his benzine cigarette lighter, convinced himself that the bill was genuine and began to ring for the concierge.

"Tell him he'll receive a big tip—"

And the concierge took him up in the lift to Alexa Alexandra's apartment.

"Please ring the bell—I don't see very well!"

Alexa evidently had company; laughter, clapping of hands, a very loud phonograph, stamping—that's just as it should be.

The door opened and Doenhoff asked the maid to say that "Rinaldo" was standing at the door waiting for her. "Rinaldo! Nothing more! You know the famous robber captain? I'm he!"

Ah! Doenhoff's heart thumped—it had not thumped as loudly when a shell struck near his dugout—an exclamation, a scream! "Rinaldo! Really!" And two arms were thrown around Doenhoff's neck, two soft, powdered, fragrant arms.

"Rinaldo! Dear, dearest! What a surprise!"

But Alexa had already discovered that this matter of the bad eyes was suspicious; these awful dark glasses!

Carefully she raised the glasses—and there where one usually finds eyes, where formerly were those eyes she had known so well, those impertinent eyes—were two red slits, no eyes at all.

Alexa gave a frightened cry. "My God, what have they done to you?"

She wept and stamped her foot.

"Ah, these scoundrels!" she cried—and the loud phonograph played a two-step— "They've shot out both his eyes!" And she pressed several quick kisses upon the red slits where formerly lay the eyes.

"Ladies and gentlemen!"—the phonograph ceased—"I want to introduce to you my friend, my dear old friend, Baron Doenhoff—a dear boy! He's blind—those devils of French have shot out his eyes! He's the famous gentleman rider, Doenhoff. You recall, gentlemen—he won so many races—Kitty, go away—now then he's again in Berlin—yes, here you're at home, you dear boy!"

Doenhoff laughed embarrassedly. He was mortified.

Alexandra kissed him, and he felt that her cheeks were wet with tears. "Another thing—ladies and gentlemen—he

does not wish any one to take the slightest notice of him. And now go on!"

The phonograph played—the feet, the shoes glided.

Alexa led him to a divan in the corner. Perfume, essences of all sorts, the odor of a stiff punch—music, and quite close to him rustled the skirts of the ladies.

"Here you'll be quite undisturbed, my dear boy. You're at home and are to do just whatever you like. Can't you see even the least little bit? No! Oh, these wretched scoundrels! Listen, Doctor, bring a glass of champagne for Baron Doenhoff—it's possible that you staked money on him and won? He nearly always won; those were good old days! In all there are fifteen persons here, Rinaldo, six, no, seven, ladies. I'll introduce them to you. Lola!

"This is the little Lola. She's really an Hungarian. She's quite dark, and her brows grow close together. But she's a very cool young person, not in the least sensual—or, how about it, Lola? Yes, come quite close to him. Don't you understand, he can't see, he's blind. Be nice to him—as nice as you can—he was nice to me ten years ago when I was still a shopgirl and danced out at Halensee on Saturday night—yes, just feel how her brows grow together—just feel—kiss him, Lola—you must be nice to him!" And Lola kissed Doenhoff and caressed him.

"This one is Fifi—how dear, she's kneeling in front of you. Kiss her, there! She's the friend of the little dark man over there with the monocle, and she tangoes better than any one in Berlin. She's blonde but her hair is dyed—Fifi—he can't see, I've told you, he's blind and so I have to describe everything to him. She dances marvelously and has won two first prizes!

"And this one is Thea—she is somewhat plump—but, Thea, he can't see you!—she has big blue eyes and is in the movies. You would have fallen in love with her because she is so droll. Kiss him, Thea, he's such a dear fellow!

"And this one here is Rolli—come along—Rolli—a little

devil! Do you see she's bringing you a glass of punch! She's only eighteen but already thoroughly bad. Pfui, Rolli—control yourself! But she's very sweet. She has—I may say it to you—she has a little weakness for her own sex and knows a lot of women from the best society. Her friend is a poet. Do you see she's drinking from the same spot where you drank? She wants to show you how she loves you. Yes, children, this is the famous Rinaldo—he's completely disguised by these awful glasses, but we'll soon grow accustomed to them!

"And this one here is Reh—her name is Rebecca—Reh, come here. Do you see she's a mere child. She has tears in her eyes. But that may be because she's somewhat tipsy. Reh! What are you doing? Ah, look, she's crying. Kiss him, there, there, kiss him! He can't see. We must all be nice to him!

"You see how you are going to be spoiled here. This is Blanche, and she's brought you a chocolate. Stick it in his mouth! Blanche is going to be married day after to-morrow, and then we shall dance day and night at her house. She's marrying a saddler who made seven millions during the war. Yes, it will be wonderful at her house. Just feel her rings. Just feel them. All genuine stones, but he's so crazy about her. Just feel her cheeks. Did you ever feel anything as soft? Her skin is perfect. Feel her lips—what did you say?—ah, you see, Rinaldo—"

## 9.

The peals of thunder gradually diminished, the storm passed slowly away.

Not until the General had manifested signs of impatience and announced his name was he able to get a telephone connection. Immediately Major Wolff who was on duty at night answered.

The General had him read the late reports. Wolff read

the most important telegrams, the most important communications—the General was at the telephone for a full hour. The thunder storm had affected the wires, and at times Wolff's voice sounded remote and small. The General went into every detail—even the smallest. He gave his orders with a cool, clear voice—and finally everything was disposed of. "Please give me a ring at half-past seven in the morning. That's all and good night!"

Then the General turned to the papers on his desk and in a moment was completely absorbed in his work without glancing up. Yes, now these were all disposed of. Again he spread out the big General Staff map on his desk. Flooded districts, natural obstacles. It should be possible at the eleventh hour to withdraw the gigantic apparatus of the army. Possibly the present condition of his nerves was responsible for a too pessimistic judgment of the situation.

The General was still in full uniform, he had not changed. And the rain still fell outside.

The strategical inspection was also over. He wrote a few notes on a pad for use to-morrow. Yes, now everything of an official character was disposed of.

Without stopping to think, with the greatest rapidity the General suddenly began to write a letter.

To tell the truth he had thought only of this letter during the one-hour's telephone conversation, during his analysis of the strategical situation. He had it fully composed in his mind, and now quickly, quickly, let's make an end of the matter.

A fortune . . .

Well, after all that was the least of it!

But he already felt uneasy. A ringing in his ears, voices which came from within and not from without, whispering absurd words to him. His heart thumped, there was a throbbing in his chest, in his head, in his arms, in his thigh. The walls of the room seemed cleaved open, the glassy eye stared through the crack into the black darkness, empty,

dead, cold, and as infinite as the space between the stars. Shuddering he pushed the desk away from him and sprang to his feet.

Light!

Loud footsteps; he intentionally made a great deal of noise as he wandered through the rooms. He spoke abrupt words aloud, laughed with his teeth closed.

"What? What? Friendship—loyalty—faith—?"

His face was gray. He avoided looking in the mirror—but nevertheless, without wishing to do so, he always saw his gray face passing across the mirror. He crept about, bent, abashed, persecuted. Whispers crawled over the walls, the dead things began to stir, the lights blinked.

In the salon hung a portrait of himself painted shortly before the war. By one of—her protégés! He had sat for the picture out of sheer good-nature; he hadn't a high opinion of modern portraiture. For many years he had been a member of an Art Society to which the high aristocracy and landed proprietors belonged; one paid a fee of twenty marks a year and for that each member received a reproduction of some art work or other. He had long ago withdrawn from this society, but as she wished it . . .

The artist had painted him with his hands resting on his sword. The face was square, hard, determined. Despite the graying temples, his face glowed with health and strength. The eye steady and determined. Possibly a trifle flattering, the picture as a whole.

But despite that these last four years had been as long as a decade.

He saw his gray and earth-colored face gliding through the mirror although he avoided looking in that direction. His back also—the lines of his back—they seemed to him to be bent, although he didn't look in that direction, but turned his eye away.

The hands resting indolently upon his sword and at the same time conscious of their strength were to-day the hands

of an old man. His skin was pallid, the veins on the backs of his hands were swollen.

Yes, he had scarcely passed beyond his captaincy years—and already he was an old man! And yet he could still visualize himself as a lieutenant! His uniform somewhat foppish for those days. And he could also visualize himself as a cadet, quite distinctly, with the short side weapons and the old-fashioned high cap.

The General had worn the "king's coat" since his tenth year. He had very rarely worn civilian clothing, possibly now and then a hunting costume in the country.

At the age of ten he was a cadet, at the age of eighteen a lieutenant, then captain, then major, then lieutenant-colonel, then colonel, regimental commander. He had rushed through the ranks at a double quick pace—but it seemed to him as if he had at all times been the same, only wearing different insignias of rank. His world, his point of view, his conception of service, superiors, duty, religion, fatherland—they had not changed. The lieutenant the same as the general.

He had really never been young, no, not even as a cadet. Never young, and already he was old!

He turned off the light in the salon, in order not to be obliged to see the confident vigorous face of the officer with the stars of the orders—youthful despite the gray hair on the temples!

Yes, yes, yes—no glossing over the matter, only courage! Otto, his son, dishonorable! The General had known at the time, when this affair with Otto's hand happened in the spring—had known at once, instantly and instinctively, just how things really were! But he had not dared believe it. Officer—Hecht-Babenberg—and yet! Yes, now he saw it all as clear as day. . . .

The General returned to his desk.

Yes, a fortune, this woman—to be accurate, Rothwasser . . . Her eyes radiated purity, loyalty, innocence. There was no one whose laugh and whose voice alone awakened

such a huge degree of confidence! Her candor, her childish naïveté, her ingenuousness, her harmlessness, impossible, quite impossible. He would have put his hand in the fire for her.

That he could have been so deceived despite his knowledge of human nature!

No! He laid the pen aside. Silence, silence—nothing more . . .

Suddenly he pricked up his ears. A voice!

That voice?

The blood in his head began to boil slowly. The veins on his temples twitched.

Otto's voice. He was calling the servant.

Was he about to challenge him, this—? The General sprang up and with twitching temples hastened to the door . . .

And indeed, it was Otto, who had come, as he often did since he had been living in the West End, to fetch something or other, books, laundry. He came at any time of the night or day, just as he saw fit, and slammed the doors without the least consideration for any one. This time he had come to fetch his raincoat. He needed it, as the rain was still pouring in torrents.

This was the ostensible reason of his visit. But the second reason, to be perfectly honest, was to show the General that he was not in the least afraid of him. No, he didn't fear a meeting, not in the least. It was this second reason that made him scream more loudly than there was really any necessity of doing. He had intentionally left the door of his room open. Any moment the door of the opposite room could fly open—well, at any rate he was armed. His bright reckless eyes were fastened upon this door, which could fly open any moment. He was ready to take the consequences—he was ready for anything. Not for the world should papa get the idea into his head that he had crawled into a corner like a coward.



But there was no sound behind the door leading into papa's room. Evidently he had taken no cognizance of his arrival.

The General—he could get no further than the door. His heart throbbed so violently that he had to hold on to something. Panting and trembling, he stood in the dark room; his legs trembled.

One more step—and something quite terrible, something indescribably sinister would happen . . .

His own flesh and blood had risen against him!

Open the door—and then, then it would happen—this dreadful thing—father against son and son against father, to the death—to the horror of the grandchildren, everlasting disgrace of the name, disgrace of the race, disgrace of the universe. Already the darkness in the room began to blaze.

“Where are my gloves, Jacob?” called Otto.

Then he knocked on Ruth's door, and the General could hear the two talking, without being able to understand what they were saying.

Five steps intervened between them, between him and his children, and the corridor. But this corridor was an abyss, unfathomable as the mysteries of blood.

“Then, I wish you a safe journey, Ruth!” said Otto and closed Ruth's door.

Yes, of a truth, an abyss, gruesome and fathomless as thousandfold fathomless fate itself.

The house door was closed with a bang. Otto had gone.

Thank God! thought the General, still trembling violently.

He stood there; the darkness was ablaze; he still panted, and the trembling of his legs grew more violent every minute.

Yes, only a step, a little step, and it would have happened. That indescribably gruesome thing that no power on heaven or earth would ever have been able to have eradicated, not even the almighty God himself.

It had happened, that indescribably gruesome thing!

The General saw his son lying strangled in the hall.

Trembling in every limb he sank into a chair; his brow was bathed in perspiration.

In the meantime Otto was hurrying across the pitch-dark Tiergarten. On his way to Stroebe's!

Gay companions, a fête day, wine, cards. How silly these trivial scruples which had kept him away from Stroebe's all this time!

The streets had been converted into veritable water-spouts near where Stroebe's house lay, but a familiar light, like the glare of a beacon, pointed the way.

Otto whistled, the customary signal, and clapped his hands. The window was opened and a shadow bent out to see.

"Who's there?" It was Hedi's voice.

"It's I," answered Otto in a clear loud voice. "You're having a party to-night, aren't you?"

The shadow withdrew. It was some little time before Hedi's voice was heard again.

"Oh, it's you," she said hesitatingly. "No, the party was called off, Stroebe is out of town!"

"Since when are you so formal to me?" laughed Otto. He could see Hedi's outline only vaguely through the bushes from which streams of water were running. The lighted window gave on to a little garden overgrown with bushes.

Again Hedi's voice came hesitatingly. "That's of no consequence," she said, "but let's leave it that way. He was called away unexpectedly on business and the party was postponed."

"Damn it! Very vexatious!"

The rain pattered down on Otto's coat, streams of water whirled about his feet. Little brooks sprang even out of the earth.

"Yes, it's too bad!" said Hedi and started to shut the window. "Good night!" The rain drowned out her voice.

"A moment!" Otto hastened to say, and the window re-

mained half open. "I've come all the way through this deluge in the expectation of finding cheerful companionship—"

"That's a very great pity!" said Hedi mockingly.

Otto threw back his head and laughed at this: "Very great pity? Listen, Hedi—I am absolutely in need of seeing my friends this evening—be a dear girl, open the door and make me a cup of coffee. I am completely drenched!"

"I'm quite alone!"

"Is that any reason—?" There was a peculiar inflection to this question.

Hedi didn't answer immediately. He could feel her eyes upon him.

"Then go to her!" she said. But she didn't shut the window.

"I've just come from her!" was his answer to this. It was very daring and he knew quite well that he was staking everything. But he had given his voice an indifferent and bored expression.

Silence. The rain poured.

"Are you happy with Stroebel?" began Otto anew, in a fully changed, somewhat confidential tone.

"What a strange question! What's that to do with you?"

"Oh, open the door, Hedi, and let's have a little chat." Hedi didn't answer. After a while she said quite softly and tremulously, "I'm coming!"

But scarcely had Hedi unlocked the door than Otto gathered her in his arms and buried his lips in her neck.

She stammered.

## 10.

Increase the treasures!

Increase the treasure of the Good and the Beautiful! Lay not thy hand upon the generations which will come after thee . . .

The morning breeze rustled peacefully.

"Dear boy"—wrote Captain Falk to Otto—"nothing came of my leave. And a flier had promised me to take me back to Berlin with him in his boat. Three days behind the front, constantly in readiness for an alarm, no sleep, swarms of enemy fliers, losses every night. Things are cheerful, I can tell you! To-night again in position. Would like to have written more—but I can't. There are certain things. Well, we fight, do our duty. Magnificent fellows! The firing increases from day to day—"

Yes, the firing increased from day to day!

The roar of the guns was to be heard as far as London, as far as Switzerland. Even the newspapers published it.

Thousands fell daily, tens of thousands . . .

*"Drink, comrade!"*

*"Savior!"*

*"Drink! Lean on me!"*

*"Savior!"*

*"Come, come, I'll carry you!"*

*"Savior! Savior!"*

Along a line hundreds of kilometers long stood the guns, ten to fifteen kilometers deep, muzzle on muzzle, heaped up on barges, rafts, coal cars, and spewed out fire and death. The projectiles were brought up by panting trains, by fleets of boats, barges, endless rows of motor lorries. The whole world was working by the sweat of its brow, in order to feed the mouths of steel. The projectiles, as high as a man, were transported to the guns in especially constructed carts, and lifted into the barrels by means of a crane. Photographs of them were reproduced in the newspapers as propaganda, singly and heaped up by thousands. The astronomers who otherwise followed the course of the eternal constellations calculated the trajectory of the monster which shot through the blue ether. Thousands, tens of thousands of guns, spewing death day and night.

And the cloud rolled, unending, over the battle-field. Dust

—the crushed soil, the crushed rocks, the crushed tree, the crushed men, shimmered in the air. The dust hung over the entire face of Europe, the dust particles of crushed and mutilated human bodies rained down upon Europe, rained down upon the whole world.

Man had finally succeeded in attaining to the highest peak of madness. The earth itself was nothing but a bomb filled with gas racing along through space.

Hundreds of thousands of kilometers had been dug under the earth—men and beasts panted—with the same expenditure of energy the deserts of the earth could have been transformed into gardens—but men were still fighting for the world monopoly of pillage.

*Savior!*

"Dear boy," wrote Captain Falk to Otto, "I don't know whether these lines will reach you or not. The commander is severely wounded and a few of the men will try to carry him through the fire to-night. They'll take along this letter. Tell every one that we're doing our duty! We've not slept for seventy-two hours and scarcely eaten anything. We're simply finished. Soon I shall be walking around behind a barbed wire enclosure. But tell every one that we're fighting, and that they'll not get us without an effort! I'll send you news as I can. Everything that has gone before was child's play—"

But this was the last letter that Otto received. By some miracle it got through, although the commander and his bearers were killed on their way back to the hospital. The letter was found on a legless man who had bled to death. An officer, whose name was illegible, had written this on the back of the letter.

Captain Falk, called Steam Roller and when things were going at a high rate "the glorious Steam Roller," would write no more letters.

A hole in the ground. And from this hole a corpse with uncovered teeth was looking out. The corpse turned its head

slowly and peeped out. Dust flying, dust shimmering. Not much to see. The eyelashes of the corpse were full of dust and even its reddish-white hair was powdered; the white lips had rubbed the dust to a paste. This corpse breathed in jerks, thrusting its head into the air. The uniform was dirty; the corpse had just vomited.

Fifty steps further on an aeroplane was burning. He was the last to come, threw food overboard, but he never returned to his base. Five steps to the left of the burning machine lay a crucified man flat on the earth, his joints broken, his arms and legs stretched out, completely disrobed by the current of air, the tatters singed; he lay pressed flat to the ground, his neck twisted. And the singed grass was still smoldering from the poisonous gases of the shell which had crucified him. There was an odor of burning flesh and burning hair.

Ten steps off to the right crouched a group of corpses around a machine gun, and the instant the corpse in the shell-hole raised his hand and showed his teeth, they fired. Shadows staggered in the sand storm. Shadows came, approached, were swallowed up. But why does the corpse in the shell-hole not go over to the machine gun? That's just it. It can not. Its legs are pinned under a heavy beam.

And so for that reason it can only raise its arms, show its teeth, scream—but no one hears.

Tanks crawl around in the sand storm. There the hill, black fumes. Through the rain of sand human bodies may be seen flying in the air—and Captain Falk sees distinctly the steel helmets whirling—the steel helmets of the Germans. There in the fog—creatures of the fog with raised hands, remote, small. And the German batteries, these batteries which were always ready, where were they? Naught, naught; now and then an explosion over there—completely out of commission, gassed.

Shadows in the sand storm, in the smoke. And again he screams and shows his teeth. Although he has had noth-

ing to eat for twenty-four hours, he is again obliged to vomit. The flat Chinese hats vanish, are swallowed up.

Twenty kilometers behind the firing line a heavy railroad gun is dragged out of the forest, manned by good-natured, sweating Canadians in their shirt sleeves. The gun crew starts back—hands pressed against its ears.

The shell was on its way. It was that shell . . .

A tank creaks through the sand storm, right over the shell-hole: Flat iron helmets. Americans. They have their guns slung across their shoulders and trot away through the sand storm. Nothing disturbs them; they have no need to hurry.

A young American officer strides along in front of the flat iron helmets, a German-American by the name of Martin. He had been told that the German soldiers had cut off the hands of little children. He had read it in the newspapers, he had even seen pictures of this with his own eyes, and now he had come to wipe these child-murderers from the face of the earth.

## 11.

The General arose punctually the following morning. He had scarcely slept at all. Sparks flashed from his eyes, he had difficulty in seeing. Again his right eyelid twitched. His skin was dry and hot, he had fever.

He didn't even vouchsafe Niki a glance this morning, although he was twittering in his cage. He moved about apathetically, heavily, automatically, as if half asleep.

Punctually at half-past eight the telephone rang; the office, as he had ordered.

The General staggered to the phone. The receiver trembled in his hand. He was obliged to draw up a chair and mumbled thickly as if he were about to speak.

Bad news, evidently. Yes, bad, very bad!

And no one, thought the General, no one—the empire

tottered—and no one, nothing, but incompetency, conceit and delusion.

Worse still—much worse! A crime . . .

The house was as quiet as the grave, dead, the dining-room somber and deserted.

A letter?

Lo and behold!

Some one writing letters!

Although he was depressed by heavy and foreboding thoughts, the white envelope struck his eye even from a distance. On the breakfast table lay a letter. "To papa!"

To papa! Some one writing a letter!

He hadn't the courage to open the letter. What could Ruth have to say to him? He slipped the letter into his pocket. His cheeks twitched. Now, it was quite possible that she had misunderstood something, had put a false interpretation upon his concern about her—she was young and couldn't grasp the fact that a father was worried, that only out of love for his child, only out of love, be it understood . . .

Suddenly the General got up.

He had grown very pale.

"Therese!"

Something incredible had happened. The General appeared in the back of the house, something he had never done before.

"Has my daughter gone away?"

"Yes, Ruth has gone!"

"Where? Don't you know?"

"No—but a letter—"

"Yes, I know—"

The General staggered through the corridor. Heavily he climbed into the car.

"Ah, ah!" he groaned as the limousine shot away, and covered his eyes.

The unopened letter still lay in his pocket.



A German field-gun suddenly blew up in the midst of the sand storm. What did they mean? Were they mad? Vanished was the field-gun . . .

The surf of iron and blood rolled up terrifyingly. The cannon cracked as if bones were being broken in the air.

The front wavered, no doubt about it, no glossing over the matter. Already there were broad fissures.

The wall of human bodies, hundreds at a time, filled in the gap, hundreds at a time shot to pieces, new human bodies plunged into every breach, yes, it was now shaken. This wall of blood, made of human brains, of human hearts glowing with love and yet devouring each other—this wall.

The last card—the very last—had been played, played against all the laws of probability. It had lost.

Hundreds, thousands, of shells a second, explosion after explosion. The blasting furnaces of the world are against you in the struggle. The exhausted, bleeding troops look about for reënforcements. The comrades, where are they? In Finland, Livland, Roumania, Macedonia, Syria, in the Ukraine, the Caucasus—far, far away, they couldn't help.

And every day ten thousand fresh courageous well-fed men rose out of the ocean.

The hailstorm of iron raged. Explosions, explosions . . .

Powder magazines fly into the air, gas boilers explode, the crashing earth swallows up cities—the drum of the ear bursts, blood trickles out . . .

The terrible crashing of the collapsing wall is to be heard throughout the whole earth.

## BOOK IV

### 1.

**O**VERNIGHT . . .

Within four and twenty hours . . .

Dispatches fly, the telegraph apparatus ticks. Pallid faces, fluttering hands, paling eyes.

What's happening?

Is it possible?

A blow with a club! The General gasps for breath and presses both hands against his chest. He fears that he will be overcome by nausea.

A game of chance—let us say—poker? But after all we're not in Monte Carlo. In the last analysis a world war is not a maneuver where the signal to halt is given by a captive balloon?

The General is ill, he too at the very last a victim of grippe—he just succeeds in getting hold of a glass of water—otherwise there would have been an accident. Sweat now bathes his brow.

Already the luminous arcs begin to crackle, the antennæ send the waves out into the ether. The receiving stations waver, the radio operators blench with the receiver at their ears. Who's speaking? Derision, a feint, a bad joke? The Nauen wireless station was speaking.

Doors slamming in the Government buildings, a flash lights up the inflamed eyes . . .

The General creeps through the rooms, wrapped in the dressing gown with the red facings, coughs, gasps. Well, then—not, not this time! Let us roll the flags together—the next time! Still more terrible and bloody than this war . . . Again he takes aspirin and coughs. He sinks in a

chair and stares, stares—he sees nothing, his thoughts congealed, checked, by the abyss before which he is standing.

With a crash the front collapses, the universe hears it—and still the army fights, to-day, to-morrow, day after to-morrow, weeks hence! It was long ago decided that everything was lost: blood and property, millions of sons and family providers, the hope and the promise of the world, the fruit of the fields, herds of cattle, treasures of the soil and the forests, sweat and toil of three generations, sweat and toil of three coming generations—everything lost! The fecundity of the women's wombs—lost; millions of young babes—victims of starvation! Everything lost! The brains under the skull, the night's sleep—all gone! The highest trump played, against all the laws of probability—and still the army fights on.

The idolized and the adored ones—until the very last man!—and then, yes, then they bow the knee and surrender their swords.

Unconditional surrender!

Here the historian of a thousand years hence will pause, take a long breath, and once more examine all the documents to see whether something has not escaped his eye, something very important, some highly important document. He will root around in the archives and libraries . . . No, nothing has escaped you; you can go on with your work quite calmly.

## 2.

It was during this time that the high dignitary who had been the bright, particular star at Dora's ball arrived in Berlin. Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves! Yes, who could have dreamed then that anything of this sort would happen! The high dignitary, whose one high order outweighed all the metal the General wore strung across his chest, suddenly appeared without announcing his arrival. In

the middle of the night, around three o'clock; the Cologne train was three hours late. It often happened nowadays that long rows of locomotives stood inactive on the rails; the copper fire-boxes had been torn out and replaced by iron ones.

Countess Heller's house was still lighted. She had guests. The high dignitary, who resembled the long-departed Franz the First, had his sister called from the room.

"In the greatest haste, Adele!" said the high dignitary in English—this was the only language used between the brother and sister—"I've come only to go again. I've important work that will keep me busy the entire night; please have my breakfast sent up at ten o'clock. All I wish now is tea and a fire in the grate—I've taken cold—and a bite to eat. And then please see that I'm not disturbed in any way—extremely important business—returning on the noon train . . ." His voice sounded husky and hurried.

Countess Heller was in a state of the greatest excitement. She had assembled her circle of intimates for a spiritualistic séance. At first a refractory spirit had appeared, an Italian monk born in Ravenna in 1512, buried in Bologna in 1553—he was very unruly and had broken the table to pieces. But just at the moment the outstanding event of all the séances held during the entire year was taking place!—they had just got in touch with the spirit of an exalted personage, with the spirit of Bismarck; tremendous revelations of far-reaching significance . . . "Perhaps you will be interested in the evidence?"

But the high dignitary displayed not the slightest desire to acquaint himself with the prophecies of Bismarck—quite the contrary. He went up to his rooms as fast as his thin, tired little legs would carry him.

Countess Heller opened the door softly and the musical mellow voice of a woman could be heard quite distinctly saying: "Will Your Serene Highness permit us to repeat our question?"

When the servant came with tea and a light repast, he found the high dignitary asleep before the fire. But he awoke instantly. "The trunks?"

"In your library as Your Excellency ordered!"

"Thank you; good night; no interruption; breakfast at ten—" And he locked all the doors and examined the curtains to see that they were closely drawn.

The suite of rooms was brilliantly lighted: paintings, bronzes, sculptures, magnificent antique furniture—the apartment was a veritable museum! Light was even burning in the mysterious alcoves of his dressing-room. The high dignitary smiled imperceptibly, in so far as this was made possible by the thick layer of wax drawn over the yellow mask of his face. His eyelids moved rapidly over the big staring eyes of Franz the First. He warmed his little waxen hands before the fire, and tripped over the slippery parquet floor of the museum with hasty, stiff, little steps, here, there, everywhere. He took a swallow of tea, then whispered to himself: "And now we will begin!" And his sloping bald head disappeared behind the portières leading to his study.

It was here that he began. The first thing he did was to open a heavy Italian Renaissance chest with a tiny key he always wore about his person. From this he took a bunch of keys. He unlocked a mahogany secretary, a magnificent piece—French Empire—black ebony pillars crowned with golden swans. Compartments sprang open, drawers disclosed their contents.

Now all the presses, chests, commodes, vitrines, of the museum stood wide open.

"Now let us begin, yes begin—! But where? Richelieu once said—"

But the high dignitary didn't reveal what Richelieu had said. At the last moment it escaped his mind, it no longer interested him.

The collection of snuff boxes, the finest in Europe—here

into this trunk. Several old volumes bound in vellum, wholly unpretentious, into the trunk. A strong-box of Frankish origin, inlaid with the Destruction of Jerusalem, containing jewelry, rings, watches, precious stones, a crucifix of gold and enamel—into the trunk. A red leather casket filled to the brim with orders—into the trunk. This portfolio of drawings, three small Dutch paintings—the old brocade makes an ideal wrapping for these—again a swallow of tea. A purse filled with gold coins, forgotten, left over from various journeys—why not? They took up scarcely any room at all. And now came the *pièce de résistance*, the most valuable piece of the collection: a small gilded house altar, Spanish—extremely valuable! Carefully taken to pieces, wrapped—into the trunk. But the small Roman bronzes—what about them?

The waxen mask glided through the mirror, it danced about between brocades, bronzes, engravings, paintings. It shone as if it were greasy, but that was due to the perspiration caused by exertion. Now it vanished into the dressing-room, came back distorted, almost twice as long as before, the lips wrinkled—his false teeth had pained him.

Again a swallow of tea. Day was already dawning. At the sight of a packet of old letters, the high dignitary grew visibly excited. At first he ran to the fire-place as if he intended burning them, then turned and tripped over to the Empire secretary. But after he had locked them up in a secret drawer, he took them out again—into the trunk.

Letters, documents—the fire on the hearth glowed for hours. And the Donatello: remove it from the frame, wrap it in linen cloths, tie it up securely—splendid! The little waxen figure shone in the reflection of the fire, or was it melting, even the long, thin hands . . .

When the servant appeared with the breakfast tray, the little Excellency was all dressed, ready to depart. Not a trace to be seen of presses, chests, vitrines—all locked.

“Please bring me a long, strong cord and several sheets of

wrapping paper!" There! Only one trunk, the tray filled with suits of clothes, would not shut. The little dignitary mounted the trunk, sat upon it, bounced up and down several times—there, see now, everything in order.

The noon train for Cologne pulled out of the station; a waxen mask, resembling a corpse floating under green water, looked out of one of the reserved compartments, a fleeting, somewhat crafty smile on its face. But that could also have been due to the illumination in the gloomy station. But no sooner had the train pulled out than the waxen mask in the compartment crowded with luggage—not to forget the hard, well-corded large flat package in yellow wrapping paper—closed its eyes and fell asleep . . .

After a long, very long, sound sleep, the aristocratic sleeper awoke suddenly; a certain excitement in the corridor! The train had come to a standstill in the sordid suburbs of some city. Twilight and steaming fog.

There! Eh, eh,—what's that?

Firing?

Yes, indeed, quite a merry salvo of shots—or?

The aristocratic traveler crawled out from the midst of the luggage and opened the door of the reserved compartment.

"Please—conductor!"

But there was no conductor, only a woman in knickerbockers.

"Will you be kind enough to tell me why we've stopped?"

"The station is occupied!"

"Occupied?"

"Yes, occupied."

"But—by whom?"

"By the revolutionary troops!"

"—by the revolutionary—?"

"Yes, another regiment has just gone over!"

"—gone over, dear me!"

"A council of soldiers is on the train seizing all weapons."

"—all weapons?"

"In Cologne they're using the heavy guns!"

"Thanks, my good woman," and the aristocratic traveler pressed a gold coin into her hand—without any exaggeration, a gold coin—and again retreated to the reserved compartment.

"Dear me!" And now the waxen mask really began to melt. Several large wax pearls ran down over his brow, he felt for them with a fluttering batiste handkerchief.

The General and Captain Wunderlich were dining together at the big round table under the snow-white crystal candelabra. Dining! They barely touched the food. Jacob brought clean plates, carried away clean plates.

"But these Fourteen Points!" asked the General, with a suspicious break in his hoarse, tired voice. His throat was heavily bandaged.

"The President is a man of honor!"

"Ahem! But please help yourself, Captain Wunderlich!"

"We have the word of a hundred million American citizens!"

"Ahem! Do pour yourself a glass of wine, I'm not permitted to drink anything!"

"And you say, Captain, the armistice terms are to be accepted under all circumstances—under all circumstances?"

"An effort will be made to obtain certain concessions. But should this request be refused: under all circumstances!"

"In other words: unconditional surrender!"

"Unconditional!"

"Ahem!" The General struggled with a coughing spell. "Ahem, but—" Impossible, he thought, his eyes sunken and somber; the nation must rise! Revolt of the masses! Fight to the last breath . . .

But he didn't express these thoughts aloud. The General had turned a saffron-yellow, his cheeks sunken and flabby. The grippe had settled in the kidneys.



## 3.

Night.

Ackermann's spirit, of gigantic stature, floats above the dark, silent city. Stars form his body. Stars form his head. Stars form his eyes. Stars form his hands. Already a cold glitter comes from the east.

The giant city sleeps, shrouded in thin veils of mist on the towers and roofs.

"Up, up, the day has come!" The voice resounds and the sleeping city trembles. "Up, up, my people! The stars sparkle! Arise! Arise and lead the peoples of the earth along the road of enlightenment!"

The stars pale. A cold light blows from the east, the fog clings closely to the roofs and towers. Gracious is the rustling of the morning breeze.

And already the sleepers are stirring! In troops, in squads they arise. The glistening girdle of light spanning the giant city is extinguished. Shadows massed together begin to move about. The windows in the suburbs are lit up. Steps shuffle along, increase in numbers; shadows massed together begin to wander; from the south, from the north, from every quarter, the shadows massed together begin their march. Hundreds of thousands of steps are on the way.

The rosy morning sky begins to sparkle. Then the city of shadows begins to glow.

Finally, thank God! the Mars whistle trills again, and the gray limousine sweeps through the cool, sunny autumn air. Pedestrians flee for their lives, the street-sweepers manage to escape in the nick of time. With a marvelous curve, incomparable, Schwerdtfeger swings the limousine around a cart filled with street rubbish left standing on a corner.

The General's eyes are again thoughtful, concentrated, fixed upon Schwerdtfeger's bent back. Still somewhat yellow, somewhat fatigued, the cheeks somewhat tremulous and

flabby, the lachrymal ducts somewhat swollen, but this is no time to think of one's self. We're on the eve of great events, and every man must be at his post!

The Mars whistle shrieks—from sheer fright an old cab horse breaks into a gallop. But suddenly: hand brake, foot brake, the limousine scrapes—halt!

Music. A battalion of sharpshooters marching in the direction of the Linden to jubilant strains—the young faces reddened by the morning sun, steel helmets, impeccable bearing. The General takes in every detail! Not one criticism! He feels reassured. Reports circulate in the city—but what fools! A glance at the map of Berlin is sufficient: a few bridges, canals, streets, occupied—whereas the city could hold out against hundreds of thousands with two dozen machine guns. Only dilettanti, splendid officers, privates, young fellows barely out of their 'teens—yes, even though he had not taken the report seriously, he felt somewhat relieved by the sight of this battalion of sharpshooters.

Double sentries stationed at the street corners, their belts studded with hand grenades. A battery drove by slowly as if returning from target practice. The officers had been assembled by a special order. Moreover, the High Commander of the Mark of Brandenburg had issued a solemn proclamation forbidding illegal assemblies menacing public life and safety, on the ground of Paragraph 9b.

Even the red brick building presided over by the General had been placed in state of siege. Steel helmets swarmed about on every floor. Officers stood at the windows. A heavy machine gun was posted in the entrance hall. After all, it was obviously the duty of a commandant not to ignore any possible precautionary measure.

The old porter with the sparse white hair and the lead medals sewed on his coat ostentatiously advanced a step farther than usual and bowed a shade deeper than was his wont. His old womanish face was wreathed in smiles. His deep obeisance was meant to express, as far as such a thing

was permissible in a subordinate, his satisfaction at seeing the General about again; it congratulated him upon his recovery.

"Your Excellency," he spluttered, and the saliva ran down over his chin.

But the General had no eyes for the old porter. Doubly serious, doubly composed, he walked through the foyer. Nor did he take the slightest notice of the precautionary measures, although they could scarcely be ignored.

He had no eye for the steel helmets, for the officers who grew rigid as statues at his approach, for the heavy machine gun, but mounted the steps just as he had always done. Only somewhat more slowly.

Steel helmets in the corridors, officers, stacks of guns, but the General saw them not. Lost in thought, he vanished behind the padded doors with the sign: "Reports. No admittance. Entrance, Room No. 6!"

But no sooner had the padded doors closed behind him than he was obliged to stop; his knees trembled—such an exertion had it been for him to mount the stairs and walk along the corridor.

The porter returned to his lodge with his old heart glowing and wholly pacified.

"Precisely as it was in the year '70!" he thought. "When we feared we were going to be taken prisoners, our General simply said: 'Young puppies!' Just those two words. It's just the same to-day. You only need to look at *his* face! No reason for anxiety—none whatever!" Chuckle, chuckle!

Hark!

Footsteps.

Hark! Shouts.

Fists hammer upon the gates of the gloomy barracks.

Open, comrades!

Open—we're here!

Rejoicing!

And the gates of the barracks open: the evil spirit of the gloomy building recedes. A dead man lies silent on the pavement covered with an army coat.

The morning sun dazzles with its splendor. The sun of November Ninth rises sparkling over Berlin.

Hark! The city trembles under the step of hundreds of thousands. Over the myriad-headed crowd floats a placard: *Don't shoot, comrades!*

Still trembling somewhat from the exertion of climbing the stairs, the General sits at his huge writing desk absorbed in his work. Documents, papers; he doesn't raise his eyes. The windows are closed, the blue curtains closely drawn, the room almost dark. Incredible what an amount of work had accumulated during his absence! The General worked just as he had prior to his illness, just as if nothing had changed in the meantime. He even tried a cigar, but soon let it go out. The papers fluttered through his hands.

Weisbach entered and made his report. Everything quiet in the city at the moment. After him came the gigantic Major Wolff with a bulging portfolio—decisions which the General's subordinates had not dared to make.

The General took up every single case in detail; he was lost in a maze of details. Here it was necessary again to call attention, here it would be advisable to press the matter, here the decision of the High Command was to be asked for telegraphically—Major Wolff noted down these instructions. But this matter the General would attend to himself. His health? "Yes, thank you, very much better; at least, able to go to work again."

Again the General was alone, absorbed in his task! The papers fluttered through his hands. Not a sound, not the least sound!

Troops in the corridors, steel helmets at every window, heavy machine guns with cases of ammunition at the entrance. The building a fortress only to be taken by force.

High spirits and laughter among the drill jackets in the

clerk's rooms. Let them ring, let them keep on ringing as long as they like!

The telephone.

"Silence, comrades!"

"The Cockchafer Regiment has just hoisted the red flag!"

"Hurrah!"

Let them ring, keep on ringing. Laughter, noise.

But not a sound in the General's office, behind the padded doors, the double windows, the drawn curtains. The scratching of the pen, the light panting and rattling of his breath, that was all.

Again Weisbach entered. His spurs clanked, the General looked up. He started: What he saw was a face carved out of chalk, the lips blue. A telegram fluttered in his hand.

Instinctively the General stood up.

His yellow face was spotted, his flabby cheeks trembled. The broad face grew gray, slowly, as gray as the dust of the highway.

He bowed his head: "Thank you!"

The spurs clanked, the doors closed noiselessly.

The General still stood, his eye upon the floor. Even his hands had grown gray.

"F-L-E-D!"

Yes, he sees suddenly, curiously enough!—tribunes black with people, elegant equipages driving up, ladies, orders glittering, tufts of feathers nodding. Foreign uniforms, brilliancy, splendor, and the troops pass in review—endless. Military bands wheel into line, and with an impeccable bearing the regiments rustle past in even rows like the waves of the ocean. And beyond, they are massed far out there in the field, the eye can not encompass them, looking like the gay-colored parterres of an endless flower garden—and every eye is fastened upon the man on horseback there under the tree—every eye!

The Spring Parade!

"Fled—"

"Deserted—"

Then the parquet floor begins to go around in circles, the walls totter. The curtains flutter and vanish. Fog circles, the stony gray face stands there in the encircling fog and trembles. The gray fingers clutch the edge of the desk.

Silence. He stands there alone in the midst of infinity, a point in infinite space, a tiny point growing smaller and smaller.

But there—do you hear: noise, tumult, steps, as though from hundreds of thousands of feet, shouts, singing—

Gradually, very gradually, the General's consciousness returns from this gruesome plunge into infinite nothingness. He listens. A step grinds down there, a thousand-fold. Tumult roars about the silent red building, a hundred thousand-fold. He refrains from stepping to the window, that would be unworthy of him. But his heart is thumping with excitement. Any minute the machine gun down there may begin hammering—any minute—there! Shouts, tumult, an inexplicable sound of something being broken, as if thin beams or boards were being demolished. What's that? Nothing. The shouts recede in the distance, the steps of the hundreds of thousands, under which the red brick building trembled, grow fainter. Again, silence. Thank God, without blood-shedding. After all, the masses are reasonable.

But this air is stifling. It is like lead, iron; it weighs heavily upon the hands.

Again Weisbach appeared in the doorway, his face still whiter.

The General straightened himself up. He stood with his legs far apart in the middle of the room, pressed hard against the floor to keep from losing his balance.

In a flash he saw everything!

The doors stood open—the building deserted. Empty the rows of offices—not a soul to be seen. Uniforms thrown

helter-skelter upon tables and chairs. Weisbach's chalky face—and Weisbach was in mufti . . .

The walls bend, they curve, soon they will fall upon him . . .

"The time has come, Herr General!"

#### 4.

As far as the eye can reach, a human mass in front of the Reichstag building, shoulder to shoulder. Shoulder to shoulder, between the high columns. Then a figure advances, waves his hat!—tumult! Roaring, the entire city is jubilant.

But the red building lies deserted! Desolate the corridors. Vanished the steel helmets, stacked guns, and machine guns. Entirely empty, deserted. Nothing remains but the huge bales, which overflow all the corridors. Bales of maps of distant countries, distant provinces, the Peipus Lake, the Congo . . .

Slowly the General walks down the steps into the entrance hall. For the first time his hand touches the stone railing.

Schwerdtfeger is just driving the gray limousine out of the courtyard into the street.

"Hurry!" he cries, with an impatient movement of his head. Entirely lacking in respect. The General's eyes open wide. What? He has still not grasped it.

There! There!

But what is that?

The General staggers back.

Another automobile, another large, open, gray car tears by—flies—no word for it—it takes the asphalt in leaps and bounds, like an aeroplane about to take the air. Sparks scatter from the tires. Sailors! A red flag fluttering, floating! Vanished.

The General's massive figure is still staggering.

Now, at last, he comprehends. The broken guns on the streets—they had been thrown out of the window—that

was the mysterious splintering he had heard, as if pieces of wood were being broken in two. And the furious noise in the streets—now he understands.

The old porter closed the door of the car.

His thin white hair fluttered in the breeze as the car drove off. He had taken off his cap. How noticeable was the resemblance to the aging Moltke to-day! In his shabby coat, with his thin neck, his fluttering white hair, his hollow gaze, he looked at this moment like an old vulture such as one sees in a zoölogical garden.

But drive on, drive on! Schwerdtfeger turns into another street. A wall of humanity. The motor groans. The limousine tears through the Tiergarten farther, still farther. Schwerdtfeger endeavors to reach the Tiergartenstrasse. Impossible. Again a long procession. Red flags.

Already a rattling noise is heard in the streets.

Captain Wunderlich leans against the wall of a house, supporting himself on his two crutches. The last vestige of color has fled from his face. He stammers. He is surrounded by reckless sailors.

Firing is heard near by. Amidst heavy applause a body plunges to the ground.

"That's all right, we see what's the matter! But it might make things disagreeable for you, Captain!"

And a sailor cuts off Captain Wunderlich's shoulder straps with a long knife.

This happens on the corner of the Linden and Wilhelmstrasse.

As usual, quiet reigns in the Wilhelmstrasse. Quiet and aloof before the war, quiet and aloof during the war, now also . . . absolute quiet.

Only at intervals a door opens cautiously, cautiously, and a head peeps out—and then some one with a portfolio under his arm scurries up the street. Gaiters, patent-leather shoes, but



the monocles have vanished into the waistcoat pockets. Some of them walk so fast that they stumble over their own feet. A few high hats also glide out of the doors, pomaded hair parted straight through to the neck. A lean dandy trips affectedly across the street, wig, microscopic mustache under the aquiline nose, a very short overcoat, flinging out his right leg with a peculiar movement: before the war, an ambassador!

Privy Councilor Westphal also shoots out of a crack in the door with his portfolio. He doesn't even dare to turn his face toward the Linden. His thin Chinese mustache floats in the breeze. There! he has already vanished around the corner.

Hurrying along behind him comes Professor Salomon—he with the pumpkin head and protruding ears. His stiff hat is pulled down over his bald head and he has turned up the collar of his coat. He whistles softly to himself as if he were quite unconcerned, but, nevertheless, he keeps turning his head, at times making a leap forward.

"Are you coming, Professor—"

"Ah, it's you! You frightened me to death!"

"No trifle, this, eh!"

"Most assuredly no trifle. I should think not . . . great God!"

"And a complete surprise?"

"I should say, a veritable bolt from the blue!"

"Despite many symptoms—there! did you hear that?"

"Yes, quite near by! Quick! Quick! I come to the office this morning never dreaming of anything of this sort—we are calmly discussing the political situation—England is said to be inclined to assume a more benevolent attitude towards us—there, again!"

"Let's try to cross the Leipzigerstrasse . . . come along. Do you know whether the trains are still running?"

"You're leaving?"

"Yes, going to the country, to my country place . . ."

"How you tear along!"

"It's very necessary. Every minute may be a matter of life and death. Just read the history of all revolutions . . ."

Schwerdtfeger raced along up this street and down that. Finally he jerked open the door: "Hurry! Hurry!" The General obeyed automatically, and off drove Schwerdtfeger.

Petersen! Schwerdtfeger had deposited him at the door of the red brick villa in the Lessing Allee, simply because he could get no farther.

The General hesitated. But there were great crowds even in the Lessing Allee, marching along in double-quick step.

He entered the house, mortified. He felt his way forward. Petersen thought of the Captain, who kept saying: "How dark it is here . . . I don't see so very well . . ."

"I'll not disturb you long, Petersen," stammered the General. "Just for a few moments. We couldn't get any farther!"

"Madame will be exceedingly sorry!"

At all events one stroke of good luck on this day! Dora was not at home. The General breathed more freely.

"Madame left yesterday for Pomerania for a visit to a family by the name of Olsen. Will Your Excellency please be seated?"

"Olsen, did you say?"

"Yes, Olsen. Will you excuse me—only a second—Your Excellency has grown pale . . ."

"And Captain von Doenhoff?"

Petersen displayed surprise.

"Why, the Captain hasn't been living here for some time. He left in the middle of the night. But Madame will be exceedingly sorry!"

That afternoon a simple country gentleman left the red brick villa in the Lessing Allee. Or a hunter, just as you will; to all appearances, a personage of some importance from

the country, who had been caught in Berlin by the Revolution. This country gentleman wore a short, old-fashioned hunting jacket, smelling of camphor, made of brown cloth, with large pockets, and heavy leather buttons, and an olive-green hat, with a little twisted feather sticking up in the back, such as huntsmen wear.

Scarcely had the country gentleman left the villa than Petersen locked the front door and let down all the shutters.

The sun was dazzling and sparkling in the cloudless sky. The heavens themselves radiated promise.

## 5.

"Clear the way!"

"Clear the way!"

Automobiles tore by.

Wide gray army coats flutter hurriedly through the streets. Here, there, everywhere. By the hundreds, the thousands. Clay-covered, dust-covered, the chalk of the Champagne, the mire of Flanders, spotted with blood, singed by the shells, discolored by the gases, full of holes—these wide, fluttering coats deluge the city.

And the automobiles race along, groups of sweat-covered men hanging to them. They crouch on the running boards, on the hood, the mud protectors, with guns and hand grenades. The red flags rattle, so furiously do they tear along.

"Clear the way!"

It is the youth of the land that has come, the new faces, the daring and determined.

"Hail, you daring ones, determined ones! Hail!"

"Heralds of the coming race, we salute you! You messengers of the new kingdom, you men filled with hope and strength, glowing with love, we salute you!"

Ackermann's wide coat floated between the red flags which were tearing down the Linden. Shots crackled. Dust rose over the city.

The volcano was spewing fire, and the earth trembled.

Lost! Everything in a single hour . . .

And the army marching back home! Regiments, divisions, army corps—hundreds of thousands, yes, hundreds of thousands. Hundreds of thousands of horses and vehicles, tens of thousands of guns—the streets overflow; shoulder to shoulder, panting; wheel to wheel, creaking; horse's flank to horse's flank covered with foam. Day and night, day and night—now, at this moment.

Sleep has forsaken the General's eyes.

He sees the gigantic army marching back, a spectacle unprecedented in history! He hears it! He sees the aeroplanes and airships tacking over the high roads and throwing down the order of march.

A moment's stoppage and hundreds of thousands die of starvation!

A moment's stoppage and hundreds of thousands fall into the hands of the pursuing enemy, whose advance guard is already visible on the horizon!

A moment's stoppage and panic seizes hundreds of thousands, the gigantic army is broken into a thousand pieces and bands of desperate men are rolling on through the German land!

A marvel—a marvel of discipline and endurance—Europe's fate hanging by a hair!

He sees the gigantic army on its unprecedented march—incredible! But he also sees that it is marching back!

*Retreat!*

In double-quick time dictated by the enemy!

Never, never; incomprehensible!

An electric light is burning somewhere in the house and at times a gray visage creeps across the surface of a mirror.

Incredible, wholly incredible!

The General stammers; he is no longer able to articulate; his pallid lips move without producing a sound.

And behind the dark curtains, behind the closed shutters, hark! Yes, again!

There it is again. The grinding sound!

The footsteps of marching men! A hundred thousand-fold, without much noise, like a people that has broken camp and started out on its wanderings—bent upon its goal—without undue haste, for it knows that the goal will be reached. He is pursued by this step. Day and night the step of the hundreds of thousands passes his window. An army has revolted and is now on the march: an army that has lived concealed somewhere. Where has it been all this time? He has never seen it. Have these men lived in the same age, in the same city? Yes, why has he never seen this army? The multitude of unknown men with eyes which are not the eyes of human beings, but those of wolves, foxes, eagles and vultures. With faces that he has hitherto only seen in dreams. Where have these men lived until now, where have they hidden themselves?

Hark! Whence! Whither!

Endless, without cessation, the step of hundreds of thousands passing by. Even during a brief sleep of exhaustion he heard this step.

The General puts on the soft hat, and the gray face, as gray as the dust of the highway, appears in the little garden in front of the house.

The eyes of the wolves and foxes, the piercing eyes of the vultures, searchingly examine the broad, gray face, and their gaze penetrates into the depths of the black sockets. But now a glow and a sparkle arise in the depths of these somber sockets—it has not gone so far as that, yet!

A new race, an hitherto unseen, unknown, unsuspected race has arisen out of the earth.

Shouts, cries, surge over the grinding stream of the new, the hitherto unseen, race. The General does not understand

them. Flags, banners, inscriptions—unintelligible. Songs, music—unintelligible.

He stands there—yes, like a tree from which the leaves have been stripped, a naked tree—and all around is nothing, nothing; fog as far as the eye can reach. And the tree grows chilly and bends before the wind.

Verily, endless! The earth has opened, the lava streams out—slowly, endlessly.

Now he is wandering along with the endless current, lost in the labyrinth of streets. His hands are in the big pockets of the old-fashioned hunting coat, the soft hat is pulled down over his brow—and his mustache has been clipped, not much, perhaps a thumb's breadth.

He wanders along through streets without end. He crosses squares, peers into side streets. His somber eye twitches as it falls upon the procession of demonstrators. Not even an automobile with a red flag is permitted to pass, without being subjected to his searching gaze. He doesn't permit himself to grow discouraged; farther down this street, down that street, he pursues his quest.

Yes, he is searching for something!

Crowds overflow the streets. The dams have given way, the flood pours through the city. They have come from the suburbs, from the factories, the lights of which have shone out into the night—through how many endless nights!—the yellow faces, the arms eaten up by bad oil, the eyes inflamed from the stinging light of the arc lamps. The pale and livid ones who have not seen the light of day for years have also come. And those who fed on turnips and rotten potatoes, while the waiters at Stifter's whispered secrets into the ears of the guests; they also have come who still believed all the lies, while the initiated long ago had recognized the truth. Also those who sacrificed their thin, worn wedding rings, while candlesticks of gold and bronze still graced the tables of the wealthy. The wretched creatures

who didn't even own a shirt to their backs have also come.

From out there—out there!

The hollow-eyed, forgotten, the despised, those who have been buried alive, the outlawed, the martyred, the crucified—yes, they have come even from the cross.

The women who would willingly have surrendered the fruit of their wombs to the General, without even haggling about it—they have also come.

And those whose husbands have long since turned to dust in the mass graves; and the mothers who have seen their babes die on their withered breasts.

They also have come who have been robbed of their reason by war and privation, and even the dying, exhausted by hardship and worry, creep by on trembling limbs. And the despairing ones whose life is counted only by hours, they also have come.

And the brave, the courageous, who not even in the most terrifying years of the war had lost their faith in the victory of their cause. Exalted be their names!

"Born of mothers? Conceived in beds?" asked the General.

Of course! Born of mothers, what a queer question. Conceived in beds and elsewhere, behind hedges, on the benches of a public garden—what a queer question—as if that had anything to do with it?

The earth has burst and they have issued forth. The formless, the unformed ones, even as yet only earth. Those who were buried alive and have been liberated by the explosion. The barracks and prisons have burst wide open. The jailbirds, the thousands and thousands who had been in the way—they are set free. Also that Indian, whom a certain Privy Councilor has kept confined for three years, he is set free and his tormentor has ordered a room at a hotel for him so that he himself might be free to flee into foreign parts.

Vanished are the mounted policemen trained to ride down

men, and the blue uniforms that were not slow about using their sabers. Vanished also that police brain which evolved a veritable Bible of regulations, he who regulated man's every step from the cradle to the grave. Away with him!

Streets and pavements overflowing. Speakers everywhere, mounted on benches, carts, wagons, automobiles. The mute! Kept mute for decades, for centuries, now they can speak! Everywhere soldiers, singly, in squads, troops, in their miserable patched uniforms. They have ridden through a sea of blood, they have risen from a sea of blood, they are still stupefied by the smell of human blood, but already a new hope is beaming in their eyes.

Gloomily the General's gaze surveys the scene. His lips twitch: the GERMAN ARMY!

He shivers.

Even the prisoners of war have been set free. By the dozens they push their way through the crowds: French and Italians, Russians and English, Scotch and Irish, Canadians, negroes, Indians. In every conceivable kind of uniform. They smoke, scratch their stubbly beards, spit and chatter. One hobbles along on wooden stumps of legs, but he laughs. Yes, but why? Because the war is won, the President will kiss him on both cheeks and fasten a lead medal to his breast. His fatherland will grant him a pension, twenty, thirty, perhaps a hundred francs a month; he will be given a hand organ free of cost; he will know no care in the future.

And now through the boiling streets come the proud and aloof ones, their breasts covered with orders, red stripes on their trousers, gold cord and glistening braid: the victors! They leave behind them an odor of laurel leaves!

The General's keen eyes espy them from afar and quickly he crosses to the other side of the street. Must they, too, come? The dice have fallen.

Even in his darkest dreams—yes, often had he been tormented by gloomy dreams, often it seemed to him when over-



fatigued as if it were more than he could bear—too much, despite the marvelous army and the unparalleled organization—too much—but even in the gloomiest of these dreams, he had never supposed it possible that one day the uniforms of the enemy's General Staff would be seen walking down the Linden.

A gleam of red against the sparkling blue sky—the red flag floating clear and bright over the Palace.

The Parliament of Novemberites has convened in the Reichstag and in the Prussian Diet, taking counsel in the same halls where yesterday the old men were bartering about bagatelles. Tumult rages where yesterday only whispers were heard; where the servants inspected the boots of the unknown, now the sentries are crouching near the machine guns. Away with the gaiters and long coats, the whispers, the floating white beards and shining bald pates, the bent backs!

Be on your guard! The new sun burns in the skies like a fiery tongue. It arose in far-distant Russia, soaked in blood and tears. It crossed the Vistula river. It will cross the Rhine. It will cross the Channel—soaked in blood and tears. It will arise from the sea on the other side of the Atlantic and the strongrooms of the skyscrapers will melt and dissolve under the fiery tongues. Even the pyramids of the Egyptian kings are to-day nothing more than piles of masonry without any significance.

One day it will also arise from the waves of the Pacific Ocean, the home of the yellow races.

This new sun will devour the old men, the cruel ones, the insolent ones, who direct the destiny of the human race; before they are aware of it, before they can stammer a word, they will be no more.

History will mention their names as it has that of Nero, who burned men as if they had been torches. But Nero's name will pale into insignificance!

## 6.

At times some soldier shot an impertinent glance at the General, and a bold eye endeavored to penetrate to the depths of the black sockets. Several audacious youths even walked along by his side for a while, taking him in from head to foot. But something gleamed in the depths of the somber eyes, and the impertinent ones departed, laughing and chatting.

The General's face was fiery red. These reprobates! And yet—strange, was it not?—he had been seized by a sensation of fear as they looked at him.

Again he felt a gaze fastened upon him. This look flew ahead of an automobile that came tearing along. It came from a jolly, laughing little face, a curious, searching, good-natured look, and yet he felt it.

This curious, searching look came from a little soldier in field-gray, wearing a tiny cap over one ear. He was perched on the hood of an automobile filled with soldiers and sailors that was plunging down the street, and his belt was spiked with hand grenades.

It was Hanuschke, as big as life—it will be remembered that he was running like mad from an English aviator at the moment the General was eating asparagus at Stifter's. Yes, the crooked-legged little Hanuschke, with the red scar between his eyes, was also chasing through the streets on this chariot of thunder. He was in high spirits. He was alive and still couldn't grasp it. And just because he was alive he laughed. He hadn't the slightest desire to do evil to any one, and as for this gray face, he had just happened to notice it.

To tell the truth he didn't even recognize it; it merely seemed to him as if he had seen it somewhere. As for the General, nowhere in his consciousness was there a picture of this little soldier with the red scar between his eyes.

But, hark, what's that?

Flags, banners, and the pedestrians step to one side.

Through the Linden swings and glides a procession upon which all eyes are focused.

Behold!

They swing themselves along on crutches, on wooden legs, dozens whose right legs are missing, dozens whose left legs are missing, dozens without any legs at all. Many seated in carts, pushed along by their comrades—they are paralyzed. Many more, led along by dogs—these are the blind. They have no hands, no arms, empty sleeves are tucked into their pockets. Their wretched uniforms conceal horrible mutilations.

Behold thy world, O Man!

They crawl along like insects, crawl like crabs, sidewise.

They hobble. Their faces are crushed beyond recognition. They have no noses, no chins; a red crack serves for a mouth. Their faces are burned black and blue; they have no ears, their necks are twisted, their heads crooked.

Behold, behold, thy world, O Man! Fall upon thy knees!

The sockets of their eyes are mere holes, the lids sewn down over them, white bullets in the red flesh. The dogs guiding them walk along cautiously, conscientiously. Behold, O Man, they are only animals.

They also have joined the procession. What all was not promised them in solemn speeches, proclamations, manifestoes!

And so here they are!

The pedestrians shrink back against the walls of the houses and turn pale. It is only the corpulent ones who grew stout during the war who are not affected by this sight.

The General stands with his hat in his hand.

Again the streets boil with people and red flags. At times companies of debaters form little islands in the streets.

The November men race along in their cars. Motor lorries push their way through the boiling sea of heads, loaded with machine guns, red flags and speakers, who address the crowd.

Hand organs, soldiers playing on violins made out of

cigar boxes, blind soldiers singing, soldiers walking on their hands, carrying chairs between their teeth like acrobats. And scores of venders in gray army coats, offering wares of every description.

But suddenly the crowd scatters. Legs hurry, arms wave in the air, hats roll over the pavement. Gun shots rattling.

A machine gun fires—and the streets are swept clean. Only a few of the more reckless soldiers are still to be seen springing from doorway to doorway.

An armored car glides noiselessly across the asphalt. It whisks along the street and vanishes.

And again the streets are filled with a surging crowd. Hand organs again grinding out their music, venders with their boxes and benches and the acrobats performing fresh stunts with their chairs.

Now a new procession enters upon the scene; shoulder to shoulder as far as the eye can reach, boiling with flags and banners.

From this endless procession a russet-colored ulster and a stiff hat suddenly detach themselves. Some one calls, beckons.

"Herr Herbst!"

"Ah, it's you, is it?"

"Yes, I! For God's sake—"

"For God's sake? And you shout out that way—shriek out my name as if we were good—old friends? And how you do look . . . Good Lord!"

"Yes, how I do look!"

Herr Herbst pushed back his stiff hat, for he was sweating from excitement. His face was flushed, his cheeks swollen. A red ribbon fluttered from his ulster.

Instantly Herr Kunze, the consumptive young man, dragged him hastily to one side.

"For Christ's sake, help me!"

"You?" Herr Herbst drew back.

Kunze removed his eyeglasses, polished them excitedly,

and looked about him timorously. His overcoat, hitherto meticulously brushed, was dusty and crumpled, the green plush hat covered with dirt.

"Yes, me! Have compassion upon me! Nothing to eat for days, no money, no place to sleep, always on the run. We went up in the air the very first day."

"Up in the air?"

"Yes, our bureau. Windows smashed in, presses broken open, everything devastated. Whither shall we turn? No one dares have anything to do with us. Just see here!"

"A wound?"

"A blow over the head! They recognized me, you know; the prisons are open and they recognized me. They beat me up and threw me in the canal."

"Into the canal, ha-ha!"

"You laugh? Yes, from the bridge, but I managed to get hold of a boat and sat there in the water until they left. And yesterday they recognized me again, a different crowd. Chased me through the whole of Berlin. I ran like the devil, ran for my life. I implore you on my knees to help me!"

"You? That's a good joke. Times certainly have changed. Justice has again returned to earth. In the long run every one gets what he deserves!"

"Ah, you're hard-hearted. And I hoped, was filled with hope, when I saw you. Ah, you don't know how terrible it is! Do you know where I've slept for the past three nights?"

Kunze dragged Herr Herbst into a doorway and whispered something to him.

"Can you beat that? To think of a man sleeping in a place like that. A merciful old woman. I stayed there until early in the morning. Usually I sleep between piles of lumber, climb over fences. Then the dogs come . . . terrible!" Again Kunze's eyes rested fearfully upon the two soldiers who were always close to Herr Herbst's heels.

"Bad, very bad, indeed!" said Herr Herbst, with a derisive

blink in his inflamed little eyes. "And him? Have you seen him?"

"Him? Whom?"

"Why him—the man you—up there on the roof—you know, out there at the Anhalter Station—"

"What? What on earth do you mean?"

"I've seen him!"

"What do you mean? You're driving me crazy!"

"Yes, seen him. It wasn't he, of course. You ought to know that, because you killed him. But his brother. Also a sharpshooter! Looks exactly like him—it struck me at once. Only somewhat younger. And the lady, you remember her?"

"Of course I remember her. We had but few such interesting cases!"

"Yes, I've seen her also. Here, look here, at this hand-bill!" Kunze's detective eyes sparkled. "They were riding together on a motor lorry—a car flying red flags—throwing out these notices to the crowds!"

"God be merciful—"

"You'd better take care not to fall into his hands. Nor hers, either!"

"For Christ's sake, help me! Rescue me!"

"Ha-ha!"

"Then give me some money so I can escape!"

"And once you tried to arrest me!"

"I know it!"

"Confiscated and desecrated my apartment. Wanted to take me to an insane asylum—threatened me, dogged my footsteps. Said that I was crazy!"

Kunze wiped the sweat from his brow.

"Acting under orders!" he stammered, holding tight to Herr Herbst's ulster. "The order was issued and I had to obey. You would have been sent straightway to a lunatic asylum because you annoyed this high officer, but I vouched for you, interceded for you, out of pure compassion—"

"And you wanted to put me in a strait-jacket! Yes, every one gets his just deserts. Justice reigns again in the land, may I be permitted to remind you?"

"Upon my knees, Herr Herbst, my dear sir—!" Kunze clung like a leech to the ulster.

And then Herr Herbst turned and gave one look at the two soldiers, who had not budged from his side. Only a look, but that was sufficient.

Instantly his two satellites stepped forward.

"What's the matter with this fellow?" asked a deep, hoarse voice.

Kunze pressed his eyeglasses upon his nose, lifted the green plush hat and disappeared like a flash in the crowd.

Again Herr Herbst swung his stiff, sweaty hat and yelled: "Hurrah! Hurrah! Down with 'em! Down with 'em!"

Already he and his two satellites had melted into the endless procession, rolling along like a mighty stream.

"Hurrah! Hurrah! Down with 'em! Down with 'em!"

Day after day they trotted through the streets, excited and sweating. They attached themselves to any old procession, irrespective of its party affiliations.

These two satellites were a short, stoutly built infantryman, a trench type, transport worker by vocation, who could carry a grand piano on his back, and a long, lean artilleryman, with a black mustache, black eyes and brows, disheveled black hair, a little round cap and a brown wool sweater with mother-of-pearl buttons. Herbst had picked them both up on the streets; in a word, he had adopted them. They were his guests at the "Lion of Antwerp." He supported them; they drank and he paid.

In return for this they were his blind slaves. They read the letters which he always carried about in his pocket—read them, understood immediately! In fact, they knew all about the matter, as they had come from out there and knew just what went on. They listened attentively when he told them

of Robert—of the attack on August 5th, although not a man had returned from the attack of August 4th. For hours at a time they listened—over and over again. Their eyes fairly burst from their skulls.

The black artilleryman rose from his seat, seized the bottle and gave the table a smashing blow.

"Just say the word—a word is sufficient! You only have to say the word!" And he carelessly threw a strong knife with a bone handle down on the table.

The stocky infantryman also arose and thrust forward his muscular neck.

"You can count upon us. Shall it be to-morrow?"

"I'll let you know when. Just wait; a little patience!"

And the black artilleryman executed a jig, waved his glass, and in a hoarse, deep voice sang his favorite toast: "Lights out, knives out, give it to 'em!"

And thereupon they all three emptied their glasses.

Yes, his blind slaves.

But in the meantime they trotted around patiently, with these endless processions of unknown persons.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted Herr Herbst, waving his stiff hat.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!" shouted the two satellites, and waved their caps.

## 7.

It is night.

The wind whistles through the Linden, the windowpanes rattle. Dense smoke issues from the houses, the city smokes. The wind roars around the gloomy palace, the columns totter. The horsetamers at the main portal collapse and fall under the feet of their horses. But suddenly it grows still, quite still; the wind ceases, and an icy current of air pushes itself along the Linden, a wandering iceberg.

Dark clouds scud across the sky, one after the other—how they fly along! Like phantoms!



Yes, like phantoms, for it is the dead, the fallen, who are standing on the clouds and rushing away over the city. The chill of the grave issues from their gray, ice-covered coats. They have lain long in the cold earth.

The General shudders, he shivers, and wraps the coat with the blood-red facings more closely over his chest. He does not see the dead up there on the black clouds, but he feels the terrible chill which they bring with them.

Fire seems to dart up at his feet, an insect buzzes past his ear. Gun firing is heard.

No, not the coat with the blood-red facings; he is in mufti, but he had forgotten it, for the moment—for moments—how long?

Sparks of fire blow out of the gloomy street canyons, but the General has no fear of bullets. He turns his face towards them; he opens his eyes and looks them fearlessly in the face; he bares his breast and even stops for a moment. Then he pursues his way unswervingly. However, he shudders, but only from the terrific chill issuing from the racing black clouds.

Light in one of the dark street canyons. A dead horse lies in the street. Shadows surround the carcass, soldiers and women with knives. They carve up the horse and wrap up bloody pieces of meat in scraps of papers and their aprons. There on the corner stands an automobile with the insignia of the Red Cross. A stretcher glides through the circle of light.

And again infinite darkness. The streets are dark catacombs; gigantic shadows dance over the deserted squares, terror lurks in the doorways. Many streets look as if a light snow had fallen. But it is only the heaps of handbills and proclamations which daily rain down upon the city. The General's foot rustles about in them. There! Some one screams—is it a woman? Yes, a bright, clear voice. Shooting is going on everywhere. The reverberation beats against the walls of the houses. The reverberation beats against the

General's heart. Every single bullet goes straight to his heart. At an end! Everything at an end! Already they are killing one another.

At the street corners notices are pasted: Berlin, halt. Thy Dancer is Death!

The General's step halts. In the middle of the pavement lies a soldier in a pool of blood—his arms and legs outstretched. Quickly the General crosses to the other side. But ere long he shudders again. Something fiery red is floating in the darkness, something white shimmers down there, like a flash of lightning.

His heart stands still from sheer fright. Ghosts? Ghosts in Berlin? No, it is only masks whisking quickly along the street.

Dance music and the noise of revelry behind closed blinds.

And again darkness, emptiness, silence, the city is dead. Only now and then the crack of a shot. The rattling of machine guns is heard in the distance.

Suddenly the General has a sensation that something unusual is about to happen. He distinctly feels the proximity of some one.

He hears a step advancing behind him. Always in his rear.

And over there also on the other side of the street—isn't it very noticeable? There is also the sound of shuffling footsteps. At times, when a shaft of light pierces the darkness, he sees two figures creeping along over there, beckoning—to whom?

And the step grinds close to his heels. He crosses the street, the step follows him; he turns the corner, and the step turns the corner.

There—now he feels the hot breath of his pursuer on his neck. A deep, hoarse voice whispers close to his ear:

"I know you!"

The General starts. He hurries on, not daring to look around.

And again the voice whispers: "General von Hecht-Babenberg!"

And over there the arms beckon, two little pale hands beckon.

The General hastens his steps, but his companion keeps pace with him. He hasn't the slightest difficulty in keeping pace with him. And the two figures on the other side of the street also begin to run.

The voice of the unknown grows louder, and suddenly the General gives a convulsive start. The voice has uttered a terrifying word, a horrible word—an indescribable insult.

Now these two on the other side of the street are calling. They beckon and scream: "Come on, come on!"

Suddenly the step behind him begins to lag. A laugh resounds through the dark, empty city. A rough, brutal voice screams: "Lights out, knives out!"

The General has no fear of bullets, none in the least. But during the time that he was being followed he had been in a veritable panic for fear a fist would shoot out at him. Unthinkable disgrace. It was only for this reason that he had fled, for no other.

But what was it; what did they wish? And why this terrible term of opprobrium? Never, on his honor and his conscience, had he ever demanded more from his troops than the interests of his fatherland unconditionally required!

Bathed in sweat and completely exhausted, he at last reached a more thickly populated section of the city.

An icy breath streamed out of the Tiergarten. No lights, no street lanterns, nothing. The heavy shutters of the houses were closed, the windowpanes dark. Black clouds chased across the tops of the trees. An automobile filled with shadows flew along the dark street. An unceasing cry of: "Clear the way! Clear the way!" resounded through the night.

Somewhere in the city could be heard the dull detonation of hand grenades.

Night without end, night of terror!

When he reached the steps of his own house the General started back affrighted. He had almost stepped upon a human being!

Who was here? The General stood trembling.

Something resembling the massive body of an animal pushed its way up the steps. An inexplicable sound; the dark mass seemed to be vibrating, as if some one were shivering from the cold.

The General hesitated, then lighted a match.

A soldier supporting himself on two short crutches was crouching on the steps. The cripple's body was shaken by a chill. Dirt stuck to his clothing and the stumps of his legs were wet through and through from the mire of the streets. By the light of the flickering match, his gaze swam without any expression in his half-closed eyes.

The General bent down to the cripple.

"What's the matter with you? Are you ill?" he asked. He only asked in order to entice some sound, some expression of a human being from the trembling heap of flesh and bones. He hastily sought in the pocket of his coat for money; the thought even passed through his mind of taking the soldier with him into the house.

The soldier emitted sounds such as deaf mutes make, but nothing but a rattling noise issued from his mouth, which he opened only by a tremendous effort.

"Where were you wounded, my son?" asked the General, and bent lower. A chill also seemed to emanate from the cripple.

"Where? Do try and tell me where?"

Stammered syllables came hesitatingly from the mouth of the cripple.

"Where? I don't understand!"

But suddenly the General staggered back.

He had understood!

And now it was his turn to tremble as violently as the soldier.

Hurriedly, automatically, he dropped a few bills on the steps and fled into the house. But just as he was about to enter the door he felt a hand cling to his right foot. Had the cripple fallen, was he seeking support while he expressed his thanks? The General threw off the detaining hand and stepped into the dark hall, his breath coming heavily.

"Therese!" or whatever it was he cried. At any rate, he cried something, and his voice had a shrill sound as if he were calling for help.

"Turn on the light, Therese; I can't find the button!"

But the General fled from the light, crying: "Quatre Vents! Quatre Vents!"

The man outside had come from the Hill . . .

For a long time the General sat motionless in one of the dark rooms.

Then he rang the bell three times. That meant supper to be served as quickly as possible! He had eaten nothing since morning. Therese came running. Jacob? Wangel? Where are they? They had forsaken him at the very first moment, just as had Schwerdtfeger. Jacob, that brave peasant, whose eyes lighted up every time he addressed his General. Despite that—the very first hour, with a wholly unauthorized permit made out by some one of the many Soldiers' Councils.

When Therese returned, the General sat at the big round dining-table wrapped in his wide army coat, which reached to the ground. He had turned up the collar. He seemed to have collapsed. But how strange he looked. No longer gray—snow-white.

His eyes stared.

A soldier from the Hill!

Quatre Vents!

His staring eyes saw red balls of light ascending into the night—as they did the night he lost the Hill.

One of his men! How did he get here? His teeth chattered.

“Therese, look and see,” whispered the General, and at every word his voice passed into a new register; “there is a soldier at the front door. Bring him into the house!”

And again the General’s teeth chattered. There was no one on the steps.

“No one?”

Well, it was possible that he had been deceived. How could that be? Possibly there had really been no one out there!

“Really no one? Have you lighted a fire, Therese?”

“I think I’d better call a doctor. Excellency is sick!”

It was some time before he grasped what Therese had said. He pressed the bell. “No physician, Therese. I feel quite well. Only tired!”

But the fork fell from his hand: he fell asleep at the table, his chalky cheek pillowed on the collar of his greatcoat.

## 8.

The black clouds chased over the dark city. Interminably, unceasingly. The dead, in their ice-covered coats, had arisen from the grave. The dead and the fallen, from the mass graves of Verdun and Ypres, from Poland and Russia, Serbia, Roumania, from Mesopotamia, from the lonely cemeteries of the Vosges Mountains, and the Champagne, the dead from the Argonne forest, the dead from the Somme, the dead who had arisen from the sea.

Hundreds of thousands were crowded together on the black clouds that were scudding along over Germany during this night. For in this night the dead returned.

Hark, they are singing! Do you hear? Their voices roar

like a tempest. What is it they are singing? Words unintelligible to mortal ears.

The advance of the home-coming army has reached Berlin. It is an endless procession, and by no means all of them have crossed the Rhine. There are millions of them.

The limousine swept on. It tore over a bridge and up an endless street as straight as a die. It turned a corner—and yes, this was now the Lessing Allee.

Suddenly the General knocked furiously with his knuckles upon the glass and instantly Schwerdtfeger applied the brakes. Before the car came to a standstill, the General had jumped out and was running rapidly along the street. But the little man in the ulster had also taken to his heels; he ran as fast as ever his little legs would carry him.

Two, three, bounds and the General had the ulster by the collar.

"What is it you wish of me? Speak!"

The little old man drew himself together timidly.

"What is it you know about my daughter? Speak, now—or—or!"

Just then the little old man melted away like mist. For a second the bluish-white face, green sparks where the eyes should be, then—vanished!

So violent was the excitement that the General started. He was still sitting at the table. Alone.

Automatically he took up his knife and fork and attempted to cut the cold meat lying on his plate. He reached out his hand for his glass—but it was paralyzed.

Cold, cold, the cold! It was icy cold in the room.

And yet the stove was red-hot. He held out his hands to the warm glow—he could distinctly see the glow—but how strange that there was no heat. It was only when he touched the red-hot iron sheeting with his pointed finger-nail that he could detect a faint heat. An icy current of air was blowing upon him.

Strange—this had been going on since that day! He remembered distinctly how the steel-blue face stared at him through the glass door, could even remember the envelope, the disgustingly offensive green color of the envelope. Since that day he had grown more and more restless. Everywhere he walked or drove, he had come upon this little man, in front of the house, in front of Stifter's, yea, every time he glanced out of the window of his office, there he was standing in the square. Frequently he had even met him in the night.

Yes, it was he, the unknown man, who had awakened his suspicions; it had all come from that—that alone!

Even to-day, even to-day Ruth would . . .

He was eaten up by pain. He walked through the room, his long army coat almost touching the floor. On his desk lay Ruth's farewell letter:—"from one who loved you, papa—and still loves you . . ."

She had done him a bitter injustice. Everything grew out of his love for her, out of the interest of a father, whose duty it was—can't you understand it, my little girl? Disaster upon disaster. He had killed him? What does she mean? Him, whom she loved? But how can you say such a thing?

The silence lurked. The icy air encompassed him, lurking, hostile. Suddenly the letter in his hand fluttered.

Beyond all question of a doubt, he was not alone.

No, not alone.

Again the long gray coat glided through the rooms. He turned off the lights. No one there—how absurd! But he felt a look fixed upon him, and this look followed him wherever he went.

Cautiously and with trembling fingers he drew the curtain, opened the window, ever so softly, and peeped through a crack in the shutters down into the street.

There—there—his heart stood still.

No, he had not been mistaken.

There he stood—the little crazy man, verily! He could distinctly see his pale face, as big as a man's fist. His eyes



were fastened upon the window, the very window at which he was standing—fastened upon him. There were two other men with him, one tall man and one stocky man. Now the tall man approached the front door, but the little crazy man called him back. They talked together; took counsel, pointed to the window, to him! Then they left, reluctantly it seemed, and were instantly swallowed up in the darkness.

Softly, cautiously, the General closed the window and drew the curtains. The air had grown icier. A cold mist had crawled into the room through the open window. Yes, he had no doubt but that the entire house was now filled with fog. The walls smoked. They were like green polished blocks of ice; they steamed.

Ruth's letter had fallen to the floor and the General stooped heavily to pick it up. He was inclined to ignore the political aberrations of a young and inexperienced girl. He was inclined to overlook certain incidents—aberrations of a young and passionate temperament. He was willing to make certain concessions to guarantee her complete liberty. Did she but demand it, he was prepared to make any satisfaction, whatsoever. Yes, any whatsoever!

But she must return.

Yes, return home. Why did she not come?

He was old, his life ruined, undermined, wrecked, without hope, without meaning. She was the only thing he had, she alone, otherwise everything had been taken.

And he loved her! "Yes, Ruth, before God, that is the truth, I love you!"

All of that he wished to say to her the moment they met. And he had no doubt but that he would find her! He would start out again early to-morrow morning. She was here, in the city. Wunderlich had already seen her twice.

Yes, all that, all that. And he would implore her, although never in his life had he implored any one. Should she demand it of him, her old father—did she insist upon it—well, then, he was even ready to humiliate himself . . .

Suddenly the General staggered so violently that he fell back in his chair. His heart? What was it . . . ?

Just at this moment the bell rang twice, three times, long, challengingly—the front door bell.

Steps could be heard in the corridor.

But the General already stood in the doorway and cried: "Don't open!" He was shivering in his field coat.

A hollow detonation in the distance—a shot had been fired somewhere out there.

"I'll open the door myself—you can go back to bed!" stammered the General, and old Therese crept back to the kitchen. There was still an acute pain about his heart. Gradually it ceased, and then the General went to the front door, opened it, and bared his breast to the darkness. No one. But were there not figures gliding along, over there in the park?

The report of a gun was heard. Another, many of them.

"They're tearing each other to pieces—like a pack of wolves!" thought the General. And then he cried aloud to the darkness: "Is any one there?"

"Ha-ha!" laughed the darkness.

*"Here I am! What is it you wish of me?"*

"Ha-ha!" Far off, this time.

No one. He went in and locked the door.

A footstep running along the street. Not a single step, but a whole troop of steps. A pack of clattering steps following the one furiously racing step. Shrieks.

Then the shadow of a consumptive-looking person whisked across the street and disappeared in the shadows of the Tiergarten. "Catch him, catch him, the spy!"

The voices died away.

Kunze panted for breath. Another second and he would have collapsed. They had pursued him for miles and every sentry had had a shot at him.

He threw himself on the ground bathed in sweat. Then the entire park began to hammer as if it were a forge. Thank God! they had lost him—their voices sounded more and more

remote. Another shriek—perhaps they were beating up some one else.

And again Kunze started out on the run. He tore through the whole length of the Tiergarten, fearfully avoiding all paths, whether broad or narrow. Finally he reached a part of the park which promised security. It was just back of the Zoölogical Gardens.

Eagerly he scanned the trees—yes, here, this was the right one. An inviting bough, not too high above the ground, but quite high enough, in fact, just what he was looking for. Up with you, the rope had already been made fast, the noose tied. There you are! And now make haste! Life could not be endured another hour . . . Yes, it was a terrible pity he couldn't have got hold of an automobile and escaped from the country . . .

And now just a second, if you please, until he had taken breath—and then: down!

He had slept in the sewer pipes of the Lindenstrasse for the last few nights, and before that in a sand-box near the Alexander Platz. Once they had him—no, no. Finale! Just a second and then: Down.

He sat there, panting, with the noose about his neck. And then he discovered, to his horror, that after all he was quite near one of the paths.

The Tiergarten lay dark and silent. Really, looked at the right way, a park was just made for suicides—isn't that so? A touching piece of consideration on the part of the city authorities! Every night some one shot himself here, or hanged himself—there was scarcely a tree in the whole park that had not been used for this purpose. The rattling of machine guns could be heard down town and occasionally the growl of a heavier gun. They were fighting. It would be a bad thing to fall into their hands just now.

Black, spectral clouds chased away over the pallid tree-tops. The dry leaves rustled. At times, as he sat there on his

bough, he heard voices and laughter, now near, now distant—and singing. Then again shots. And peculiar noises, miauw-ing and bellowing, came to his ears from the Zoölogical Gardens.

And this was to be his end! What would his father, the pastor, say to it? A suicide in the family! Disgrace, disgrace—a visitation of Almighty God in the Heavens! Luxury—beautiful women—and fame? Nothing had come of it, nothing at all. Just as the war began he was about to go on the stage. Hamlet! He knew the whole of Hamlet by heart.

“To be, or not to be!” he whispered, raising his arms.

He almost lost his balance.

To walk about in the footlights, admired, applauded . . . letters from beautiful young girls and married women . . . all come to naught!

And now—the stitch in his side had ceased—and now . . .

Just then he heard footsteps approaching. He grew rigid from fright. Were they returning? Why had he hesitated so long?

Two shadows wandered along the path. Suddenly they turned into the bushes. They crept nearer, ever nearer. Yes, as sure as fate, they were looking for him. His hair stood on end. He no longer dared breathe.

A man and a woman, who lay under his tree. Something white shimmered, whispers, kisses, laughter, talking—a little scream—he was obliged to sit there a full hour without stirring. Finally they went away again.

But now he didn't intend to wait another minute!

The darkness began to flash. Eyes opened themselves in the darkness, frightened eyes—yes, most frightened when the hand of the law was stretched out after them! The eyes of the young man also who lay on the pavement, still breathing faintly and cried: “All men are brothers!” Yes, these eyes also . . .

Kunze wept. And suddenly without a moment's deliberation he took a leap. A sharp pain shot through his neck—the end, everything over . . .

But a second later Kunze found himself sitting in the damp grass. At first he couldn't grasp it . . . the rope had broken.

With the rope still about his neck he ran through the dark park, weeping.

## 9.

The General stands bent over the map, his countenance icy and determined. The chief of staff enters the room noiselessly. The automobiles and motor cycles of the messengers begin to roar and rattle. The earth trembles from the firing, shells strike quite near by, as if huge doors of bronze were being slammed.

Everything going well!

His opponent over there, that scoundrel with the French cap and the white imperial, had taken the Hill by surprise in the middle of the night. But he had counted without his host! Already the soldiers were tumbling out of their hayricks, already the motor lorries were rolling by, they were going to give them hell! Before the sun rose the Hill was again in his hands.

Everything went splendidly—the sharpshooters had again drawn the teeth of the "Labyrinth"—the chief fort of the Hill. But something strange was happening. All at once there seemed to be fewer officers. In fact, there was no one at all in the anteroom. Only two men were left in the clerks' room.

It certainly was strange! Where is the chief of staff? The General rang. No one came. He threw open the door impatiently: no one to be seen. Again he went into the clerks' room. The telegraph was clicking—no one! The guns roared less loudly.

Where were they all, the crowds of officers, adjutants,

clerks and orderlies? The entire château with its hundred rooms was empty. He found his way about by the light of the gun fire. Pictures, furniture, mirrors, all glowing red.

Not a soul!

A shaft of fire passed from time to time over the wall of the park. The howitzers were stationed behind this wall; quite so. The General hastened his footsteps. A glow reddened the night—not a human being and not a sound! The General crept around the gun, terrified. Not a soul—what did that mean?

Again a projectile shot out and by its gleam the General saw the big somber château collapse, the roof cave in, the columns, the doors, without a sound.

Terror seized him. He screamed aloud.

Then he awoke. His eyes scanned the walls.

It was some time before he realized where he was. He sat in his study, in his chair, just as he had a few minutes before. Strange, the clock ticked, the pendulum swung to and fro, but he could no longer hear the ticking.

His eyelids were as heavy as lead, his limbs felt as if they were paralyzed. What had happened to him? Tired, tired.

"I'm tired!" he said with a thick tongue.

"I'm tired, very tired!"

He tried to stand, but was forced to remain seated. At his feet lay a note-book, a thin soiled note-book. Ah, yes, these were the last notes made by his son, Kurt—he who fell at Combres in the Battle of the Somme, glorious defender of the fatherland. Now he recalled everything: he had taken it out of the secret compartment of his desk to read it, as he had done on many, many lonely nights. Fire, hardship, fright, death . . .

"And all in vain!" whispered the General and shook his head uncomprehendingly.

"All in vain!

"What's happened?

"A nation of beggars!

"A nation of slaves!

"Exterminated from the earth, ground under foot!

"All, all in vain!

"Ah—!"

The General groaned. He covered his white face with his white hands.

He stood up. But his legs refused to carry his massive torso. He sank back in his chair. His heavy eyelids drooped—visions passed before his eyes. And yet he was awake, he was not dreaming. He could distinctly remember just having read Kurt's notes. The little note-book lay at his feet.

Now he was climbing the Hill with the little old man, the persistent one who would not be shaken off. He had seized him by the hand and together they ascended the Hill, and yet he knew that he was sitting in his study.

"And so you insist upon going up the Hill? You need have no fear!"

"No, no fear!"

The Hill was not dark, although it was in the middle of the night. It was dimly lighted. It was not lifeless and silent; it was crowded with people. They stood there in hosts, man to man, in their gray coats; the entire top was covered with them. A wall of gray coats to the left and right. Thousands and thousands of them, all pale. Livid, the color of corpses.

"Herbst, that's the name?"

"Yes, Herbst!"

"And what was the Christian name?"

And then he screamed: "The sharpshooter, Robert Herbst, step out!"

"Here!"

"Here!— Here!— Here!"

All around about the Hill the hoarse soldier voices cried: "Here, here!" All—!

Yes, it was peculiar—he could hear the soldiers replying so distinctly, and yet he knew perfectly well that he was sitting in his chair.

The General's ice-cold face sinks down upon his hand. His eyes see nothing. Yet, strange visions pass before his sightless eyes, flow on, incessantly, without end—strange pictures.

Suddenly the General's white hands flutter wildly in the air, and he stands erect in the middle of the room.

A face has appeared: *The face of a weeping woman . . .*

A gleam comes into his large bright eyes. Again he can see quite distinctly the various objects in the room. Distinctly he sees the discolored portraits on the wall—every one of them. All of them officers in uniforms, decorated with orders, sword at the side; all the same broad faces, solid chests: all Hecht-Babenbergs. And that one-armed man above the door is Jochen Friedrich Wilhelm Ernst Hecht-Babenberg, who acquired the family estate after the Thirty Years' War and was the originator of the family motto: Laurels and land.

Suddenly his fatigue has vanished!

The General totters through the room, staggers, wavers, but he doesn't sense it. He is frequently obliged to support himself against the wall. But he is not aware of it. For him there are no longer any walls.

The walls have vanished. His gaze passes out beyond them, far, far, infinitely far!

He sees—O terrible spectacle—a world in flames!

Yes, the world in flames! Europe, Asia, the kingdom of the Mongolian race; Africa, the kingdom of the black race; America—all in flames! They crawl through smoke and fire: behold! Yes, it is they! Now they have become reality! Gigantic cities of steel, gigantic cruisers, crawl through the smoke of the burning world. They are rigid with guns, they belch out flames, the pumps squirt the burning oil out



beyond the horizon! Their wheels crush cities and stamp upon rivers. The entire horizon sparkles like black coal. A burning continent melts and disappears in the sea.

Yes, he can see them quite distinctly!

But now comes the army itself, as endless as the waves of the ocean. Regiment after regiment, their equipment clanks, and so they pass before his eyes.

He wraps himself more closely in his coat. The wind whistles icily! The air is frozen, ice; there are already fissures in the air as there are in glaciers, but the army marches on. Their steps thunder.

There, there, see there!

The city! Dark, sinister, smoking. And the red flags are distinctly to be seen floating over the dark smoking city. Quite clearly! The flags of the rebels float audaciously!

The General raises his hand—attack!—and the army unending, immeasurable, rolls on towards the burning city.

But it is icy, bitterly cold; the wind blows, as bitter as poison, and the General wraps himself more and more closely in his coat. The cold is already gnawing at the cloth; fragments detach themselves from the garment. Already the cold is gnawing at his skin, which peels off; already the cold is gnawing the lungs . . .

## 10.

Niki sang his morning song, but the General did not hear it.

He lay there wrapped in his gray army coat. His eyes stood wide open—what did they see?

Like a gigantic black river the crowds passed slowly, endlessly; red flags floated, the bands played funereal music, battalions of soldiers, battalions of sailors. Mountains of flowers. Underneath these mountains of flowers lay the victim of the War of Freedom.

At the same hour the black-draped hearse containing the General's casket left the house Captain Wunderlich in the coat of a common soldier hobbled along on his crutches, escorting the body to the station. Aside from him, no one. No, not a soul.

In the heart of the city they came to a halt. The hearse bearing the General's casket met the long funeral procession which overflowed the banks of the city.

For hours the long procession rolled by without a break. Scarcely was one band out of hearing than another took up the strains. Hours went by.

Wunderlich with his crutches sat down in the middle of the street.

Yes, verily, it is endless, endless! An ocean of people rolls by. Waves of flowers over the undulating sea of people. Steadily, without haste, the steps of hundreds of thousands pass on; the city begins to thunder and roar . . .

High above the stream of heads floats Ackermann's ghost:  
"My people, my love and my longing fly along before thee!  
Wilt thou be the elect and the chosen among all the peoples of the earth? Behold how thy great spirits gaze down at thee, how they sparkle in the firmament of thought! Arise, arise, set out upon thy path!"

At last the streets were free, the black-draped hearse bearing the General's casket was again set in motion. Wunderlich picked up his crutches and hobbled along behind it.

Darkness was falling, already the black fog sank over the streets. Already the rattling of guns could be heard in the City of Darkness!



